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ABSTRACT

This paper presents preliminary research findings on children's ideological questions and some results of an inquiry among teachers regarding the treatment of such questions in groups of children. The project work focused on (1) what capabilities children have to deal with ideological questions and problems, (2) what is the educational starting point regarding the treatment of ideological questions, (3) what are the characteristics of an ideological question or a philosophical problem (4) and how can teachers and other staff answer the children's questions in the ideological sphere in an appropriate manner. Included are graphic representations of frequency distributions of teachers' answers to various questions such as: how often do teachers encounter different ideological questions in teaching groups of young children? The appendix includes the extensive questionnaire filled out by teachers participating in the study. (MS)

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CHILDREN AND IDEOLOGY

An introduction to a research and development project and some preliminary findings.

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Questionnaire

CHILDREN AND IDEOLOGY

It is a common saying that one child can ask more questions than seven learned men can answer. But what questions do children put? What do children think about? Do they frequently think about ideological questions, i.e. questions concerning life and death, the origin and meaning of life, right and wrong, and the like? How do children reason when they think about different subjects and what is the significance of the home environment in this connection? How do the teachers react to the children's questions? Do these questions create problems among groups of children and, if so, how can these problems be resolved? Questions of this kind are being studied at present in a project entitled "Children and Ideology".[1)] In the following pages, the project group presents its work and some results of an inquiry among teachers regarding the treatment of ideological questions in groups of children. This inquiry was carried out in the introductory stage of the project.

The place of ideological questions in educational work among young children has periodically been the subject of intense discussion. How do small children get on with big and difficult questions? This and similar questions have constantly recurred in different forms in the discussion. The problem has been particularly topical in connection with various educational reforms. It was last raised by the introduction of general pre-school education.

The "Children and Ideology" (BaLi) research project began in the autumn of 1973. It is located in the Department of Educational Research at the School of Education, University of Stockholm, and is financed by the National Board of Education.

The aim of the BaLi-project is to study the capabilities of pre-school and junior-school children of understanding and dealing with ideologi-

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The Swedish titel of the project is "Barn och livsfrågor". The word "livsfrågor" - word - for - word in English "life questions" - and the connected expression "livsåskådning" have no precise equivalents in international language usage. Exemples of cognate words are, however, vorldview (German: Weltanschaung), ideology and life-philosophy.

cal questions. The project is also intended to shed light on the problems of teaching methodology which may arise when such questions crop up among groups of children. With this approach, the project group is working primarily on child studies but also on family studies, on the analysis of the subject field and curriculum documents, on contacts with teachers and on development work. The problem area is too extensive in its entirety to be given a complete treatment within the scope of the project. We have therefore to select certain parts of the area for detailded study.

Four questions in the project work

The project group is trying to shed light on the problem area from different points of view. Four questions may serve to summarize the group's different angles of approach to its task.

What capabilities have children of being able to deal with ideological questions and problems? This initial question will take up most of the group's attention.

One problem to which an answer is sought is simply what children think about. If we can get to know that, we can also shed light on several important related questions, such as how common questions associated with ideology really are in the children's world and whether both children and adults have common problems in the ideological sphere.

Another important problem is how children, with their characteristic ways of thinking and reasoning, reflect on different ideological questions. Yet another important problem area is how the children's judgements and attitudes to life are affected by influence from the world around them, chiefly from parents, teachers and playmates. In the extension of this problem area, we also find the problems connected with cultural clashes between the home and the school or pre-school.

What is the educational starting-point, as regards the treatment of ideological questions? This is another principal problem in the project work. Here, contacts with the pre-school teachers, the junior-school teachers and the recreation leaders are an important element.

The investigation whose results will be presented in broad outline further on in this booklet forms a stage in this part of the project work.

A third problem in the project work concerns the characteristics of an ideological question or a philosophical problem. It has turned out that the concepts used in popular and scientific discussions in the ideological sphere are often diffuse and merge into each other. It is therefore essential for our work to elucidate the meanings of concepts such as "ideological question" and "life philosophy", in Swedish "livsfråga" och "livsåskådning". We also believe that such an elucidatory discussion may be of use to teachers and other interested persons. A thorough elucidation of the essential concepts in this field may perhaps also help to show similarities and dissimilarities between different standpoints on ideological questions. This would also provide a good starting-point for increasing our understanding of what an ideology is and what it may mean to a person.

In working on questions of this kind, the aspect of teaching methodology is also of interest. How can teachers and other staff answer the children's questions in the ideological sphere in an appropriate manner? This is the fourth question in the project work. We do not regard it as our task to produce a package of teaching aids or anything of that kind. On the other hand we believe that, on the basis of our child studies and our studies of the educational starting-point and the different formulations of aim, we can do some worth-while development work. In accordance with the plans, this work is concentrated on formulating principles and guidelines for the treatment of the ideological field with regard to the age-groups in question.

Collecting the teachers' experiences

Before trying to investigate a problem area of the type which the BaLi project is concerned with, an attempt should be made to get a clear idea of what the problems really are. Here the assistance of the professional teachers is undoubtedly necessary. It is they, of

course, who daily encounter all the difficulties which are to be studied in the project. In order to gather up their experiences as comprehensively as possible, we sent out a mail questionnaire in the spring term of 1974 to a selection of pre-school teachers, junior-school teachers and recreation leaders.

The questionnaire comprised four different "blocks" of questions. The first "block" dealt with the training and working conditions of the addressees. The second "block" contained questions concerning the difficulties which may arise in discussing three different ideological fields, namely, "Man and Death", "Violence, War and Oppression", and "Belief and Religion". The third "block" comprised questions about the occurrence of different ideological questions in the group of children, partly how often the questions occurred, partly how important and urgent the teachers considered that the questions were to the children themselves and partly how difficult or how easy the teachers considered that it was to deal with these ideological questions in their work. The questionnaire concluded with a fourth "block" of questions concerning the teachers' own involvement in various questions of an ideological character. See frequency distributions on different items in appendix A and the questionnaire in appendix B.

Do children think about ideological questions?

How often do ideological questions crop up in groups of children? Figs. 1 and 2 show how the teachers assessed the occurrence of various ideological questions. The following 15 examples of ideological subjects were assessed:

How everything began
How life is carried on
Growing old
Man and death
Family relations
Owning and sharing
Showing consideration and tolerance
Questions concerning responsibility and conscience
Feeling lonely and forlorn
Differences between people
Dealing with one's feelings: Anger, fear, joy, sorrow
Violence, war and oppression
Sickness and accidents
Belief and religion
Society and politics

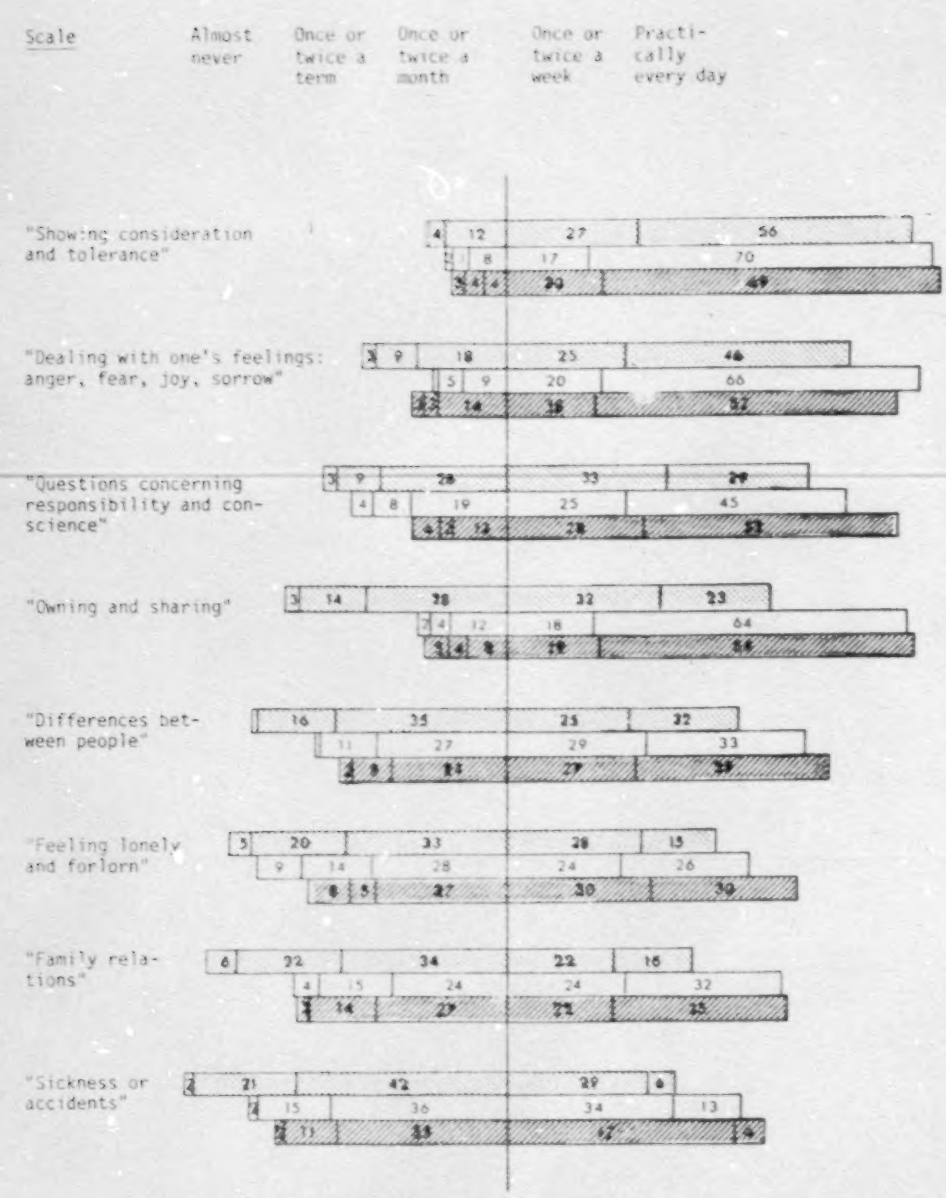
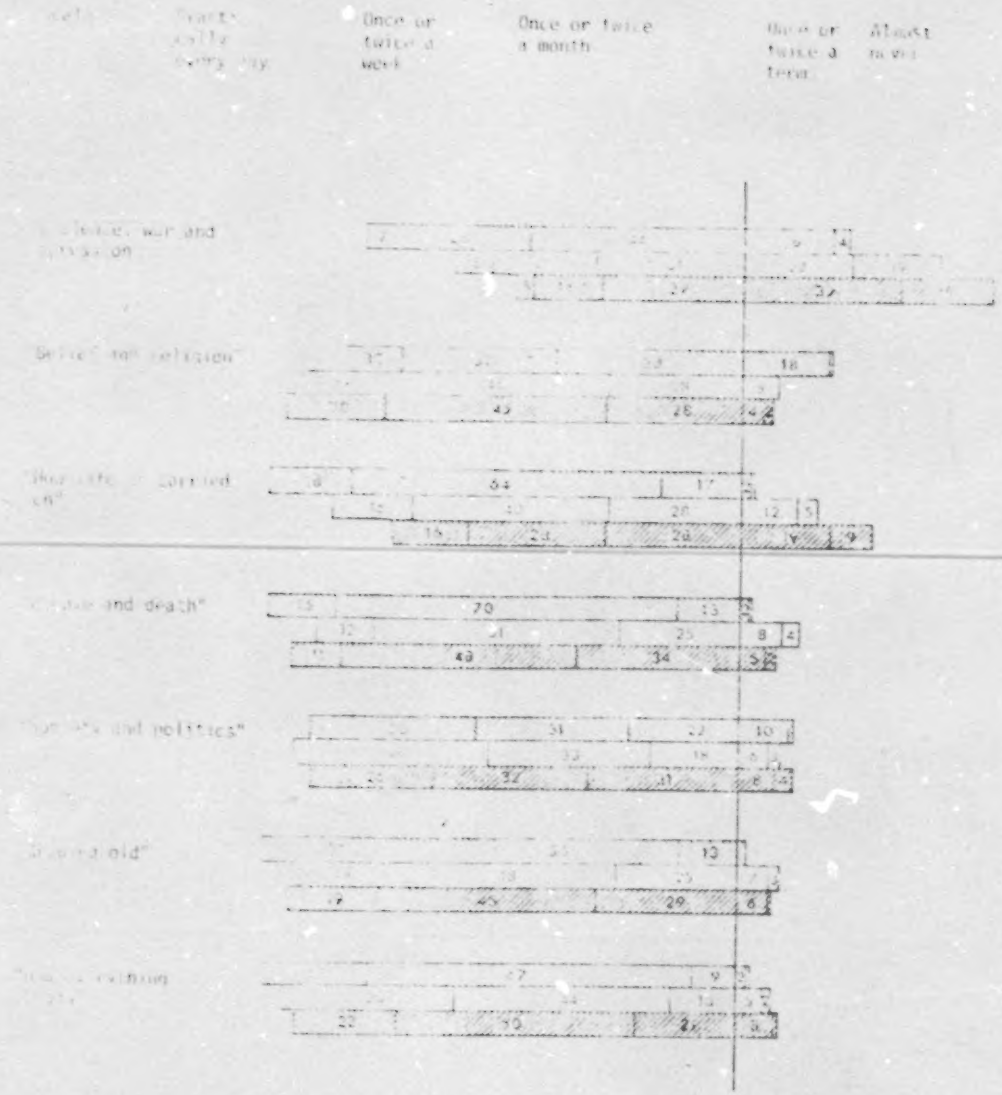


Fig. 1. How often do teachers encounter different ideological questions in teaching groups of children?

The distribution of the replies is given in percentages for the teachers' ratings of the eight most frequent ideological subjects.



How often do teachers encounter different ideological questions in teaching groups of children?

The distribution of the replies is given in percentages for the teachers' ratings of how relatively frequent ideological fields.

The result show, amongst other things, that the most common ideological questions of all are those which have been formulated on a fairly practical level. They are questions which concern, directly or indirectly, various aspects of life in a group of children. This is, in itself, fairly natural, but the result also show that questions more closely associated with philosophy also crop up in most groups

of children, although not as frequently. The question whether or not ideologically oriented subjects should be introduced among groups of children seems to us to be already somewhat out of date. Ideological questions of several different kinds are already being discussed in these groups.

Ideological questions are of such a character that neither children nor adults constantly go around thinking of them. But when a question comes to the fore for some reason, it is often important to the individual. The teachers' assessements in the inquiry of how important the questions are to the children may therefore be just as interesting as their assessments of how often the questions crop up. Most of the 15 ideological fields mentioned are also important to the children, in the teachers' opinions (figs. 3 and 4). Generally speaking, there is unanimity between these assessments and the estimations of how often the ideological questions crop up.

A few teachers' comments taken from the inquiry material may be used to illustrate this fact:

> I think it is very stimulating to discuss different ideological questions in school. The children are very interested and often have views which I consider illuminating and I believe that it is very important that "difficult questions" should be discussed in school. Many children do not talk to their parents about such things and have a dammed-up need to discuss them and to listen to their playmates and their teacher.
>
> Junior-school teacher in an ordinary class

> Questions about death, violence, war, oppression and particularly belief and religion are difficult for both children and adults, but the children are in most cases more interested and franker about these questions than the adults. It is therefore of the greatest importance and the children's right that such questions should be discussed also in the pre-school.
>
> Pre-school teacher in a nursery school

Where do the difficulties lie?

Part of the aim of the teacher inquiry may be summarized by the question "Where do the difficulties lie, as regards the discussion of ideological questions in groups of children?" There are a good 50 different questions in the inquiry which deal, directly or indirectly, with this question. The teachers' assessments were made on the basis of the three ideological subjects "Man and Death", "Violence, War and Oppression" and "Belief and Religion".

When one examines the replies to these questions, one find some circumstances which seem consistently to cause difficulties for the teachers. They are to some extent relatively obvious circumstances, such as the size of the group and the supply of textbooks and teaching aids. All three professional groups, i.e. pre-school teachers, junior-school teachers and recreation leaders, are agreed that the lack of textbooks and teaching aids and too large groups of children substantially reduce the oppurtunities of answering the children's questions in the ideological field in an appropriate fashion.

The replies also touch upon more complicated circumstances, which affect the possibilities of making good contact with the children on the questions concerned. There does not seem to be any difficulty in capturing the children's attention, as regards questions of this kind. Thus, there is a lively interest on the children's part for the teacher to connect on to. Generally speaking, the teachers are also favourable to the idea that ideological questions of this kind, i.e. questions about death, about violence, war and oppression, and about belief and religion, should really be discussed in groups of children.

The difficulties begin in earnest when it comes to adapting the discussion to the pupils' individual capabilities. Various difficulties connected with the teacher's endeavour to individualize his teaching or to meet the individual child's needs predominate in the problem complex. The large groups of children and the difficulties of dealing with questions of this kind in a way that is concrete and understand-

able to the children are two important problems in this connection. It is also considered to be difficult to avoid conflicts for the children, in situations in which the teacher's view is opposed to the parents'. This difficulty is further augmented by the fact that many teachers consider that it is difficult to know what attitude the parents take to questions of this kind.

Many teachers feel that it is difficult to strike a balance between saying frankly what they think themselves and the risk of giving the children onesided quidance. It may be that this conflict situation is one of the main points in the difficult problems of objectivity. The feeling for fair play requires that one shall be honest both with oneself and with the children, without exposing them to serious clashes between values. We think it is important to observe and discuss how best to cope with this. A selection of comments from the questionnaires may also serve as a summary of the difficulties encountered by the teachers in their work:

> The most difficult thing is that one cannot always find material to show concrete examples. A negative feature is that one always has such large groups of children, though many of these questions can be more easily discussed in small groups or individually ....
>
> Pre-school teacher in a nursery school

> I don't know how realistically I may venture to discuss ideological questions. How much will the children stand? Where can I get hold of suitable study material? Is it not possible to have <u>small</u> groups of pupils in connection with the discussion of ideological questions? We teachers need TRAINING in these matters!
>
> Junior-school teacher in a special class

> War games and weapons and killing in games are very difficult to put a stop to. The children understand Vietnam, for example, but are incapable of seeing the similarity between the tragedies there and their own play.
>
> Recreation leader

The most difficult thing of all in these matters is to see that the children and I mean the same things by the words and phrases that we use. A class has got on to the subject of death and has discussed it for a good while when a girl suddenly exclaims, "Oh, are you talking about real death? I thought it was death on the TV". Then another says, "It's real death when people don't believe in God and don't go to heaven".

Junior-school teacher in an ordinary class

... I should like to know more about the parents' attitudes to ideological questions of this kind. In our quarter of an hour's discussions with parents, the ideological questions are seldom touched on. I notice that the parents easily become embarrassed if one tries to talk about them.

Recreation leader at a leisure centre

It is difficult to remain neutral as a member of the staff. One is torn between one's own belief and the children's. One would like to tell what one believe oneself but is simultaneously afraid of how the children will react.

Pre-school teacher in a day nursery

A child came to me with a question about God. I tried to explain that some people believe in God and some do not. She then asked what I believed. She became extremely uncertain and unhappy when she found that her mother's views and mine differed.

Pre-school teacher in a day nursery

Which ideological questions are the most difficult to cope with?

It is clear that all ideological questions do not involve equally great difficulties when they crop up in groups of children. Some of these questions are on a level which is difficult for the younger children to grasp, while others are formulated on a more tangible

level, which is easier for children to understand.

In a part of the inquiry, the teachers were requested to rate different examples of ideological questions according to how difficult or how easy they thought it was to discuss them whith the children.

The results of the inquiry showed that there were five ideological fields which appeared to be much more difficult than the other. They were "Society and Politics", "People and Death", "Belief and Religion", "How Everything Began" and "Violence, War and Oppression". As Fig. 3 shows, over half of the teachers considered that ideological questions in these five fields were difficult or very difficult to deal with in groups of children.

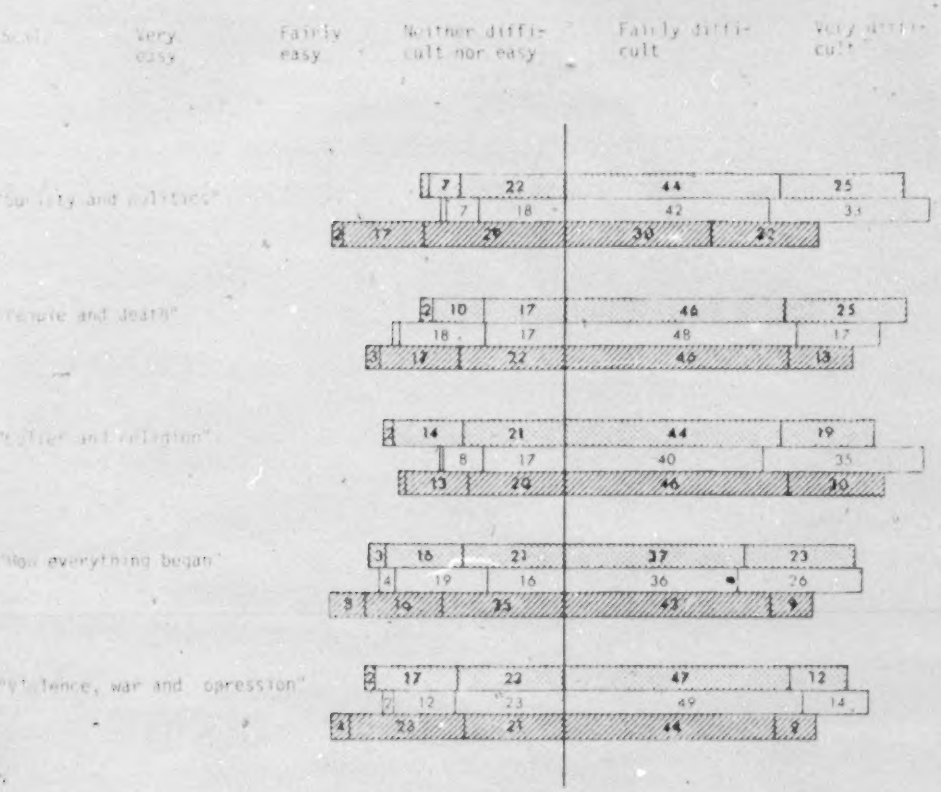


Fig 3. How difficult or how easy do teachers think that it is to discuss different ideological questions with the children?

The percentage distribution of the teachers' ratings for the five most difficult ideological subjects.

What it is that distinguishes these questions from other, less problematical questions? One essential characteristic in this connection seems to be that the "difficult" questions are on a fairly high level of abstraction, a level on which intrinsically obvious phenomena and problems in human life have been difined and formulated and perhaps inserted in religious or ideological systems of thought. This being so, the questions may also be controversial, at least to the adults.

The children seem in most cases to be unafraid of ideological questions, even when they begin to ask themselves why things are like this or like that and why one thing or another is what is good and right. It is, of course, often the "why?" questions which lead from the "concrete" ideological level to the more abstract superstructures of the ideological questions, i.e. to the different philosophies of life.

The sensitive character of the ideological questions is also reflected by many teachers' comments. Here are a few examples:

> I have brought up at the staff meeting the suggestion that we should talk to the children more about violence and oppression in particular. Mention that Sweden is a favoured part on the surface of the earth. Opinions are very divided among the staff, who represent all political views, including those which back up oppression, and so it is difficult to agree.
>
> Recreation leader

> Of course, we adults (the staff) never speak openly to each other about death. This must mean that we are in a poor initial position for beginning to discuss it with the children.
>
> Recreation leader

> In my experience, we talk too little about death. When I have brought up the subject in class, the children have seemed to be wondering, "Do people speak of such things?" But afterwards they have gratefully seized the opportunity and talked freely about what they think.
>
> Junior-school teacher in an ordinary class

> We explain to the children everything that we do, everything, except the Church, death and sexuality.
>
> Pre-school teacher in a nursery school

Are the difficulties the same for all teachers?

It is clear that the educational problems will not be easier to cope with if the teacher himself also feels uncertain in this field. According to the results, approximately every other teacher is uncertain about subjects such as "Man and Death", "Violence, War and Oppression" and "Belief and Religion". Almost as many consider that their training is insufficient to enable them to give instruction in such subjects. But the teachers' uncertainty varies to some extent with their commitments in the field of philosophy.

If we look more closely at the teachers' own commitments, it turns out that these seem to mean a great deal as regards the way in which they react to possible difficulties in connection with the children's ideological questions. Religiously committed teachers feel that they can, more easily than other teachers, solve certain - but not all - educational problems connected with the children's questions on the subject of "Belief and Religion". There is a similar tendency as regards the teachers' political commitments and the children's questions on "Society and Politics", though that tendency is not as clear. On the other hand, the results indicate that a personal commitment in a certain ideological field may also involve certain difficulties, for example, in collaborating with colleagues.

Taken altogether, the results of the inquiry show that the teachers' personal philosophies may mean a good deal, as regards the task of answering the children's ideological questions. We therefore believe that it is essential that the teachers should receive help on this point in their training and in their further training. It is important not only that the teachers should have factual knowledge about ideological questions and different philosophies of life but also that they should themselves have opportunities of working on these questions. This may lead to an increased awareness of their own standpoints and a more open way of confronting other people's views of life.

> .. I wish that in their training teachers were given a broader outlook, as regards philosophical questions. I have often met [illegible] instruction.
>
> Pre-school teacher in a nursery school

> [illegible] fields - ethics, philosophy, belief, sexual knowledge, etc. the teacher is pitiably poorly trained. One has simply to proceed by trial and error and to learn from one's errors. This is not how it should be. The training should be concentrated more on this, because it is extremely important for the pupils that the teacher can and dares discuss subjects of this kind!
>
> Junior-school teacher in an ordinary class

Different traditions and forms of instruction

The inquiry material has afforded interesting opportunities of comparing the experiences and views of three different categories of teachers - pre-school teachers, junior-school teachers and recreation leaders. On the whole, they seem to have similar experiences of the difficulties of dealing with ideological questions. But there are indications that these teacher groups are working in different traditions, which also present different educational attempts to solve the problems. In this respect, the pre-school teachers and recreation

leaders seem to differ from the junior-school teachers. The method of working in the junior school makes it possible to go more deeply into certain ideological questions within the framework of the general subjects and therefore a more material-centred or school-centred approach seems to be natural in dealing with ideological questions. On the other hand, the nursery-school sector seems to have a different method of working, with greater scope for the children's own initiatives. The differences are noticeable only as tendencies in the material and in most cases the similarities in the answers of the different teacher groups are certainly much greater than the dissimilarities. Nevertheless, we believe that the different starting-points of the three teacher groups may offer many suggestions for a fruitful exchange of experience.

How are ideological questions to be dealt with?

In view of all the difficulties which the teachers are confronted with in connection with the treatment of ideological questions, it would be understandable if they tried, as far as possible, to get away from these problems by glossing over and passing by ideological questions when they were brougt up in groups of children. But this is clearly not the case. Only a few teachers are doubtful about discussing ideological questions in groups of children. This is perhaps due to the fact that the teachers know from experience that different ideological questions crop up relatively often in groups of children and that they are concerned with subjects which are important to the children. This is clear from the teachers' judgements in our questionnaire.

If it is the case that ideological questions of different kinds and on different levels crop up regularly in most groups of children, then the problem of how these questions are to be dealt with will be unavoidable. The results of our inquiry have clearly shown that many teachers experience difficulties when called on to deal with these questions. The children's way of thinking may make it difficult for them to grasp what the discussion is about. Contact between teacher and parents may be particularly problematical precisely in connection

with ideological questions. The teachers themselves often also feel uncertain when faced with this matter, perhaps owing to their training being inadequate. Thus, there are many circumstances which aggravate the situation today.

The BaLi-project does not at present have a sufficiently solid basis to enable us to tackle seriously the problems of dealing with ideological questions. But we hope that our further work will secure us a basis on which to treat these problems. We believe that what is needed more than anything else is knowledge of the children's capabilities of handling ideological questions. What kind of thoughts do children have? How do they manage to follow a discussion of such questions? What does home influence signify, as regards the children's ways of behaving in life? When we have got an idea of the facts on these points, we believe that we shall also have a good starting-point for treating the problems involved in discussing ideological problems in groups of children.

Even now, however, we think that we are in a position to formulate a general principle. It is connected with the nature of this subject field. An ideological question may, of course, refer to many different aspects of life, but it is always formulated on the basis of a personal experience. What is an important question to one person is therefore not necessarily always an important question to another. An ideological question is always of personal importance to the person who is thinking about it; otherwise, it is not an ideological question. Thus, it is in the nature of the subject field itself that the discussion of ideological questions must start from the children themselves, from their own questions and from their own experiences. If the relation of the ideological questions to the individual person is neglected in discussing them, then, strictly speaking, we shall be occupied with something other than ideological questions.

A principle of this kind must, of course, be regarded rather as a general guideline to work by than a methodical solution. A number

of problems remain, even if we try to apply such a rule. Some of these problems are discussed in the report in which we have described the material collected by the teacher inquiry. This also includes an account of the general background of the problem field and a discussion of the results of the inquiry. The report is entitled Små barn och stora frågor. En probleminventering bland lärare om livsfrågor i förskolan, på lågstadiet och på fritidshem (Small Children and Big Questions. An inventory of the Problems Encountered by Teachers concerning Ideological Questions in the Pre-school, the Junior School and the Leisure Centre) (Report No. 15, 1975, Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Institute of Education, Stockholm).

Readers who wish to follow the work being done in the BaLi-project may get into touch with us at the following address:

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The persons at present attached to the project group are Gunilla Dahlberg, Sven Hartman (project leader), Marianne Lidefelt, Bengt-Olov Ljung (scientific leader), Sten Pettersson, Ingrid Ståhl and Siw Vinestrand.

APPENDIX A

Graphic representations of frequency distributions of answers on different items.

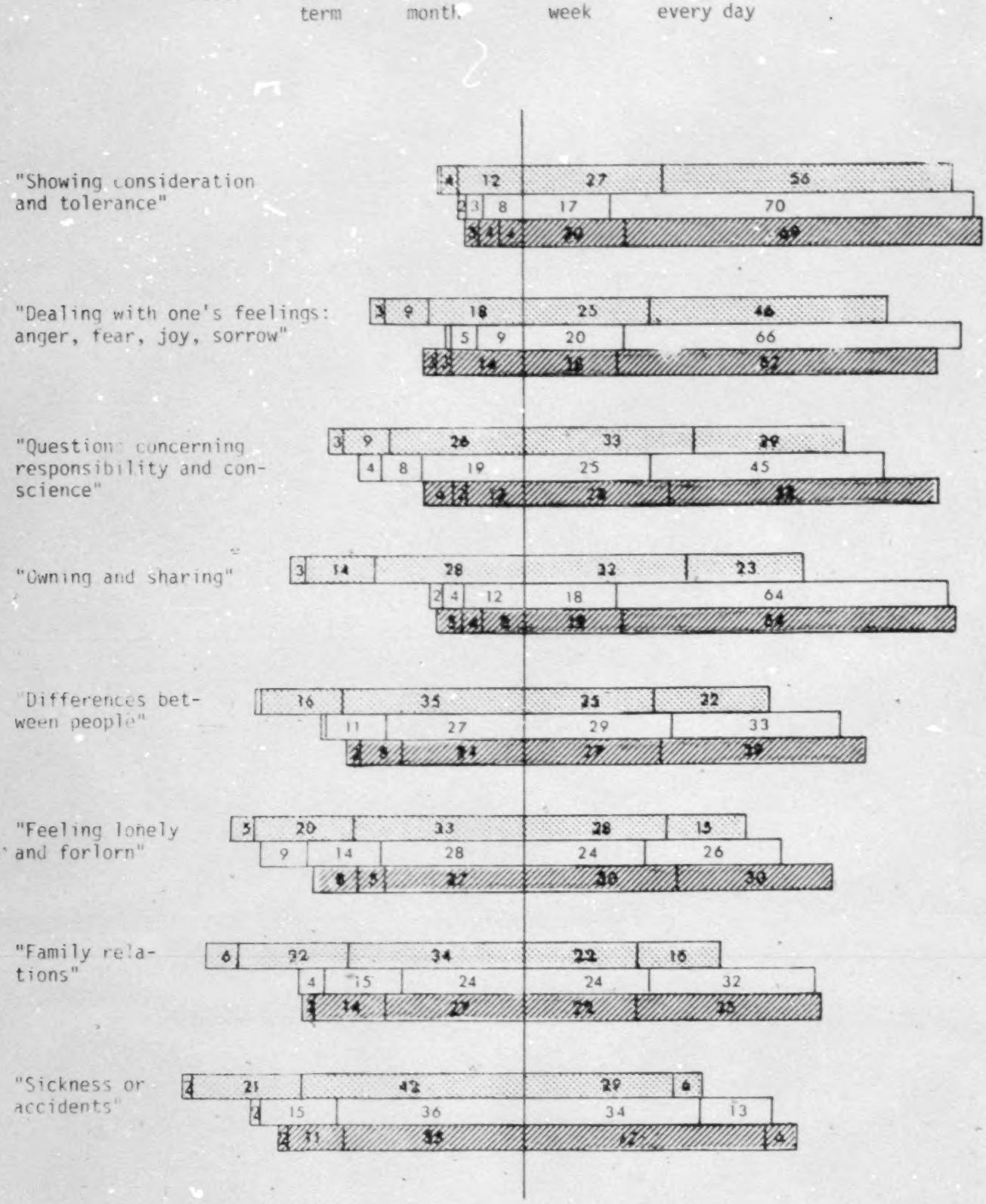


Fig. 1. How often do teachers encounter different ideological questions in teaching groups of children?

The distribution of the replies is given in percentages for the teachers' ratings of the eight most frequent ideological subjects.

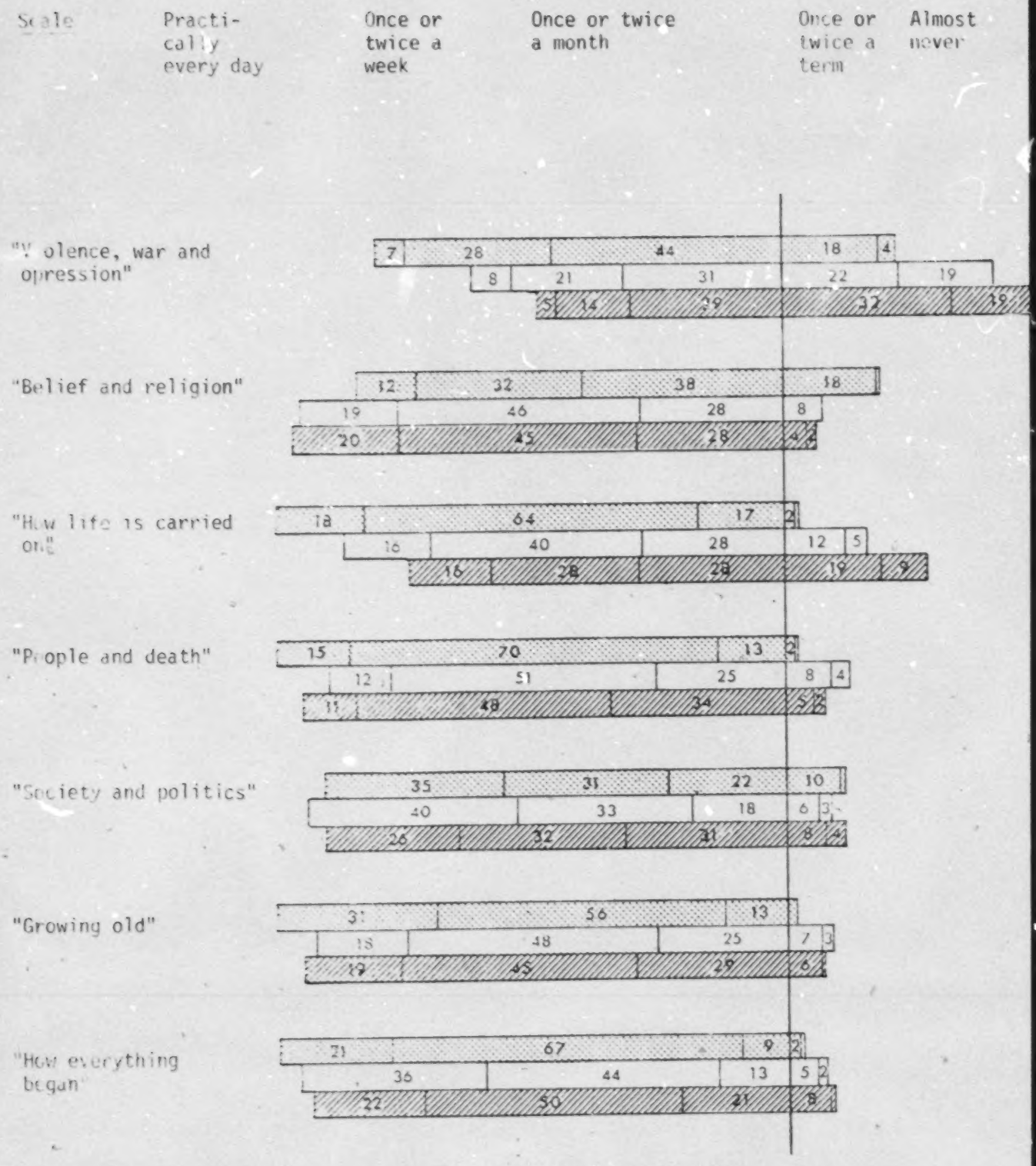

Scale
Practically every day
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Once or twice a term
Almost never
"Violence, war and opression"
7 28 44 18 4
8 21 31 22 19
5 14 29 32 19
"Belief and religion"
12 32 38 18
19 46 28 8
20 45 28 4 2
"How life is carried on"
18 64 17 2
16 40 28 12 5
16 28 28 19 9
"People and death"
15 70 13 2
12 51 25 8 4
11 48 34 5 2
"Society and politics"
35 31 22 10
40 33 18 6 3
26 32 31 8 4
"Growing old"
31 56 13
18 48 25 7 3
19 45 29 6 1
"How everything began"
21 67 9 2
36 44 13 5 2
22 50 21 5

Fig. 2. How often do teachers encounter different ideological questions in teaching groups of children?

The distribution of the replies is given in percentages for the teachers' ratings of seven relatively infrequent ideological fields.

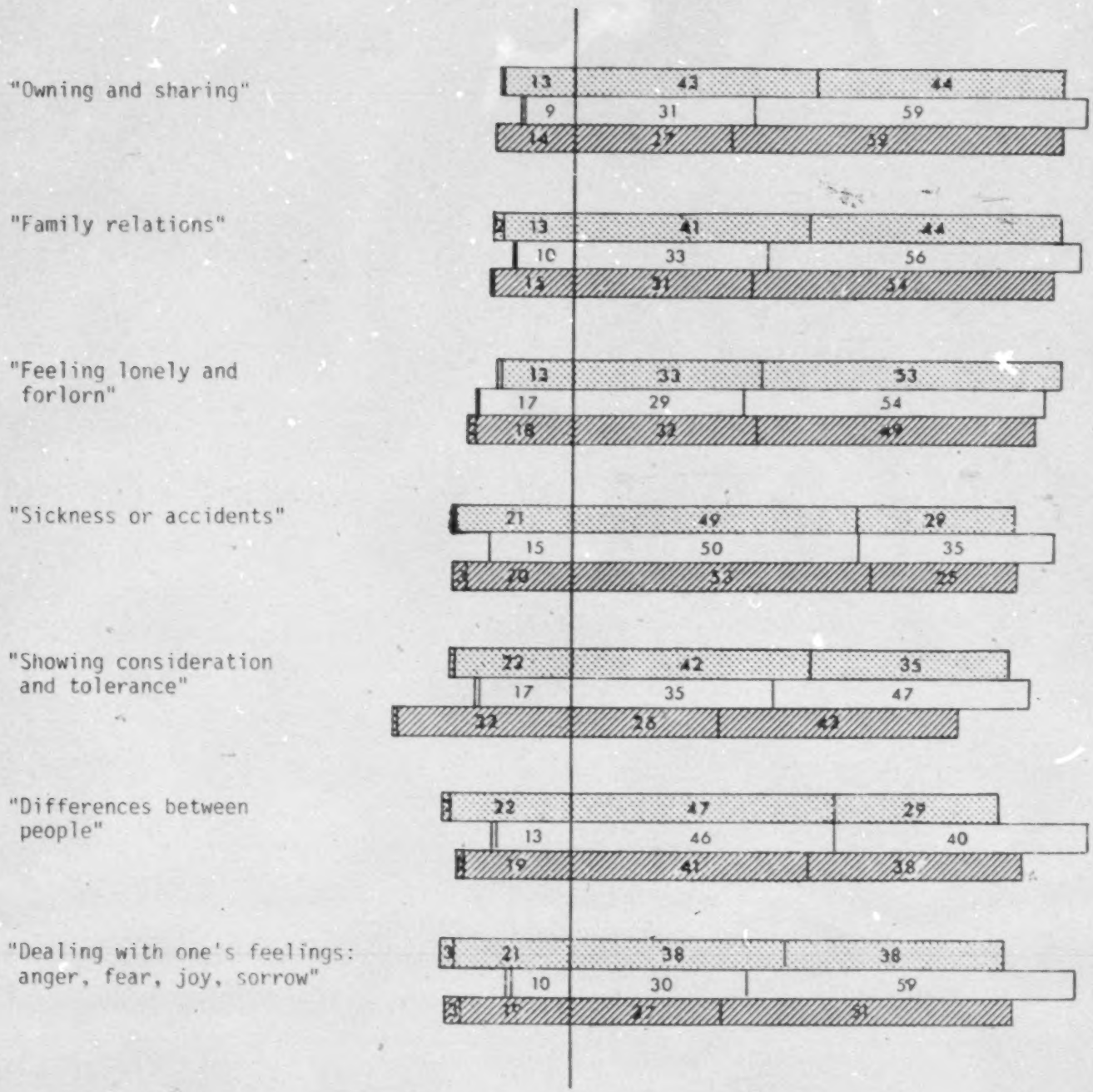
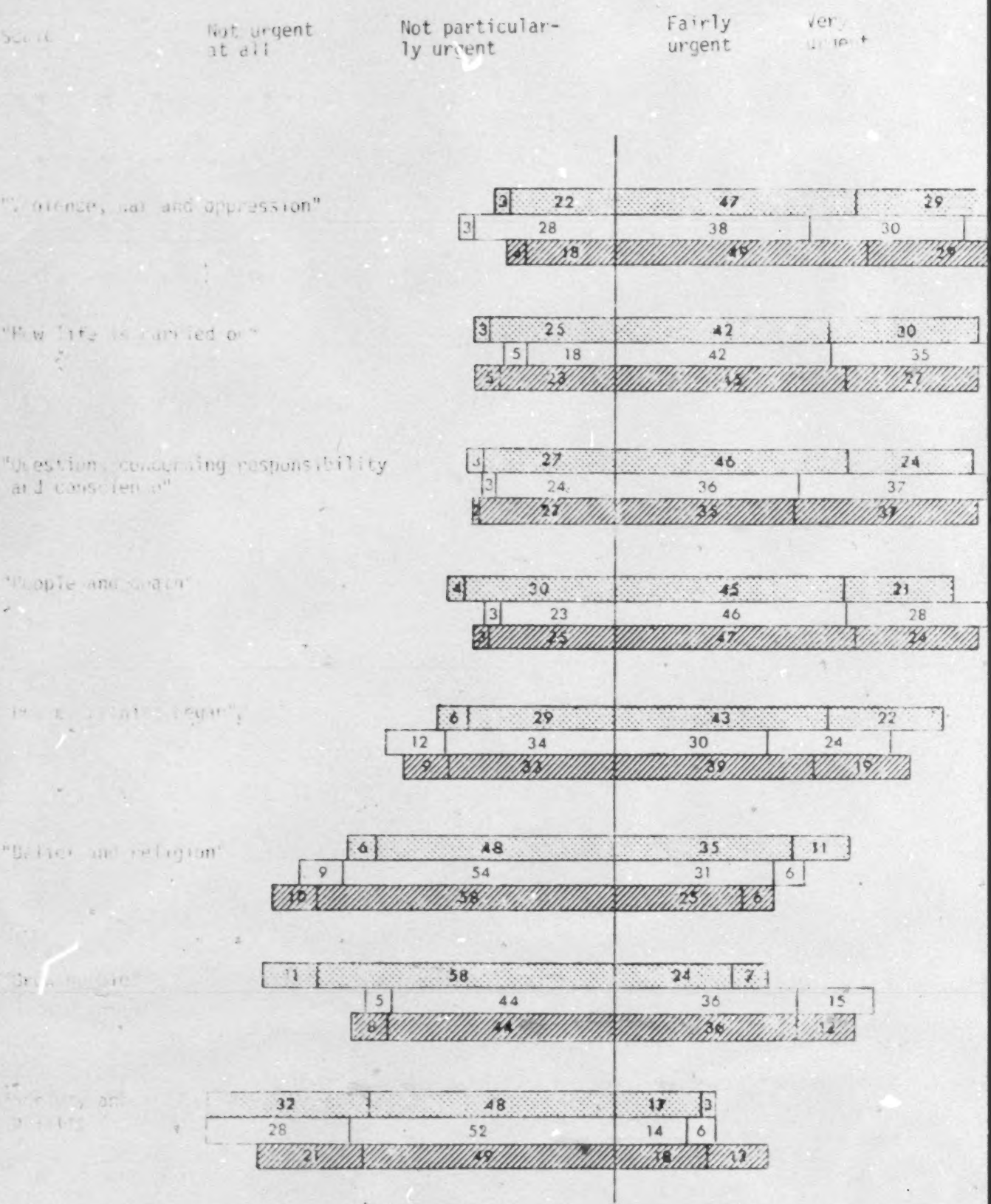


Fig. 3. How important and urgent do the teachers consider that ideological questions are to the children?

The percentage distribution of the teachers' estimates of the seven most urgent ideological subjects.



How important and urgent do the teachers consider that ideological questions are to the children?

The percentage distribution of the teachers' estimates of eight ideological questions' varying degrees of urgency.

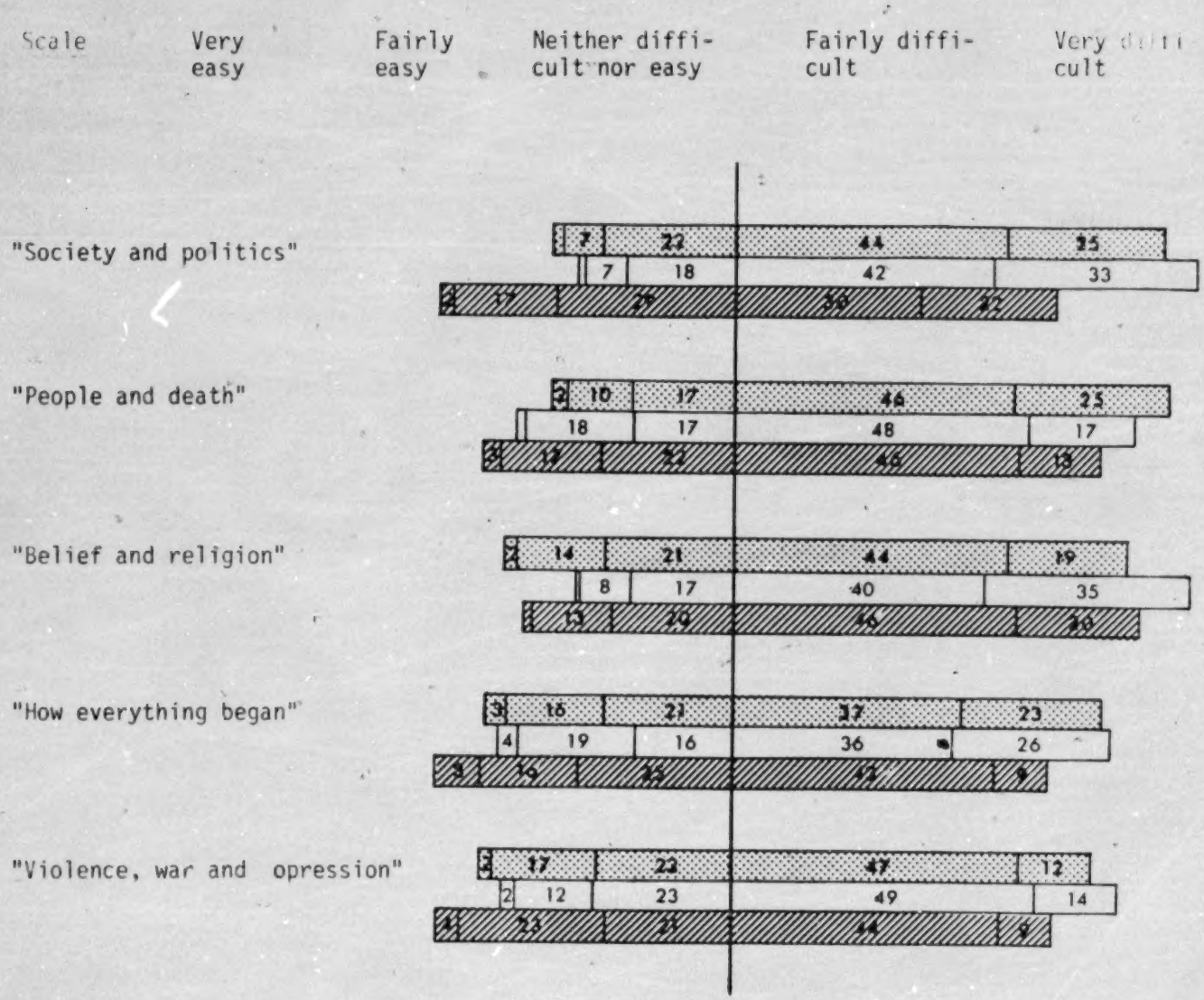
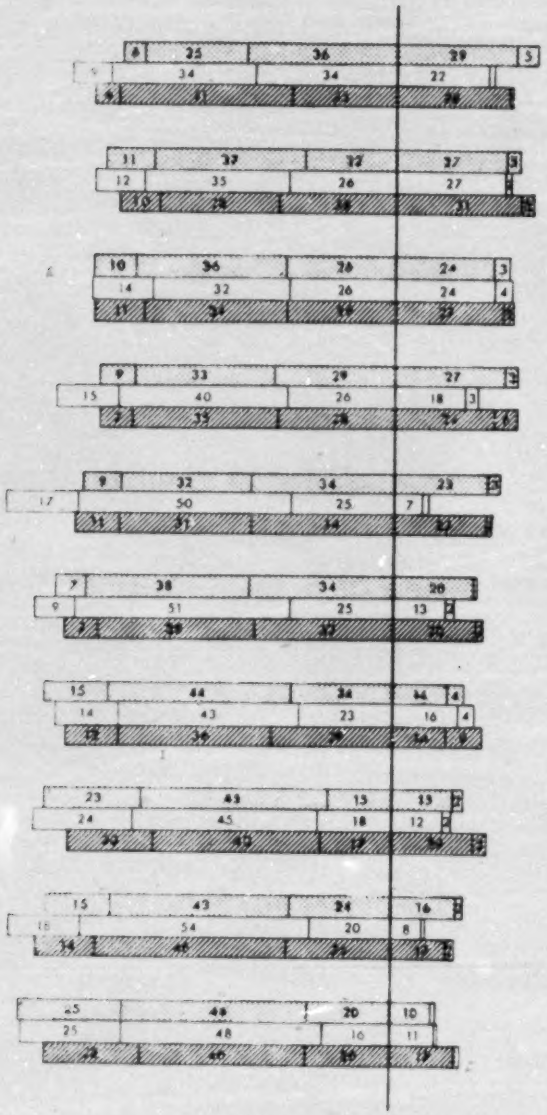


Fig.5. How difficult or how easy do teachers think that it is to discuss different ideological questions with the children?

The percentage distribution of the teachers' ratings for the five most difficult ideological subjects.

Scale	Very easy	Fairly easy	Neither difficult nor easy	Fairly difficult	Very difficult



"Sickness or accidents"

"Feeling lonely and forlorn"

"Questions concerning responsibility and conscience"

"Dealing with one's feelings: anger, fear, joy, sorrow"

"Family relations"

"Growing old"

"How life is carried on"

"Showing consideration and tolerance"

"Differences between people"

"Owning and sharing"

Fig. 6. How difficult or how easy do teachers think that it is to discuss different ideological questions with the children?

The percentage distribution of the teachers' ratings for ten less problmatic ideological subjects.

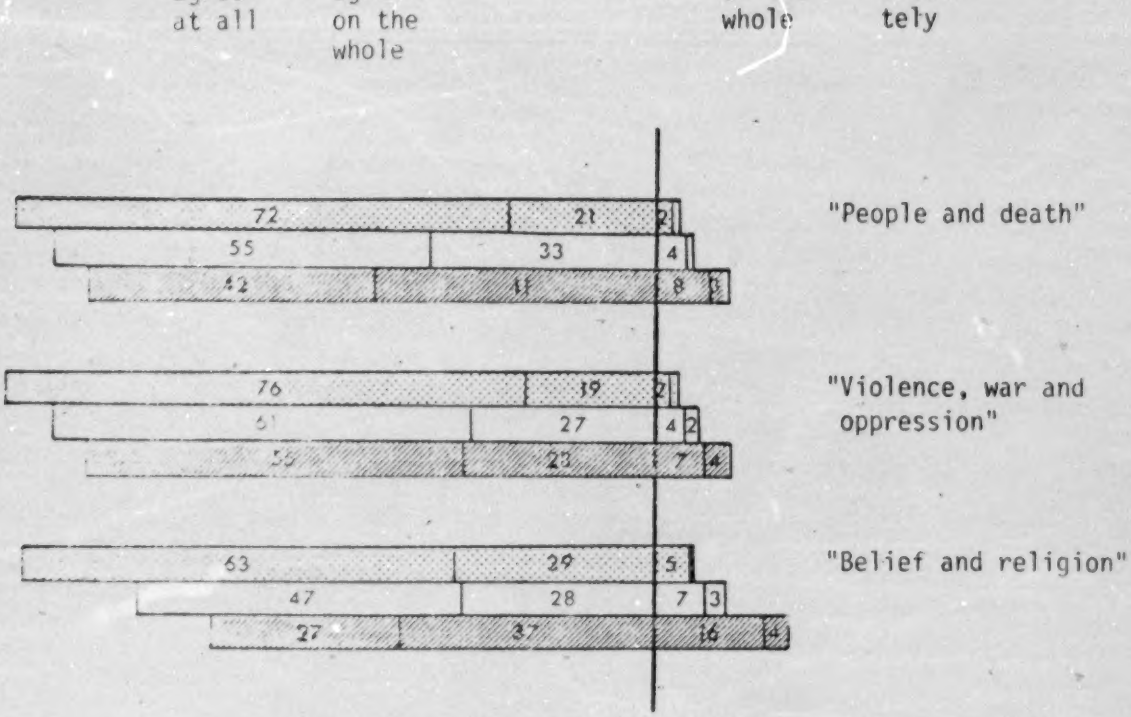


Fig. 7. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to capture the children's attention and get them to understand what the discussion is about when one raises a question like this".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

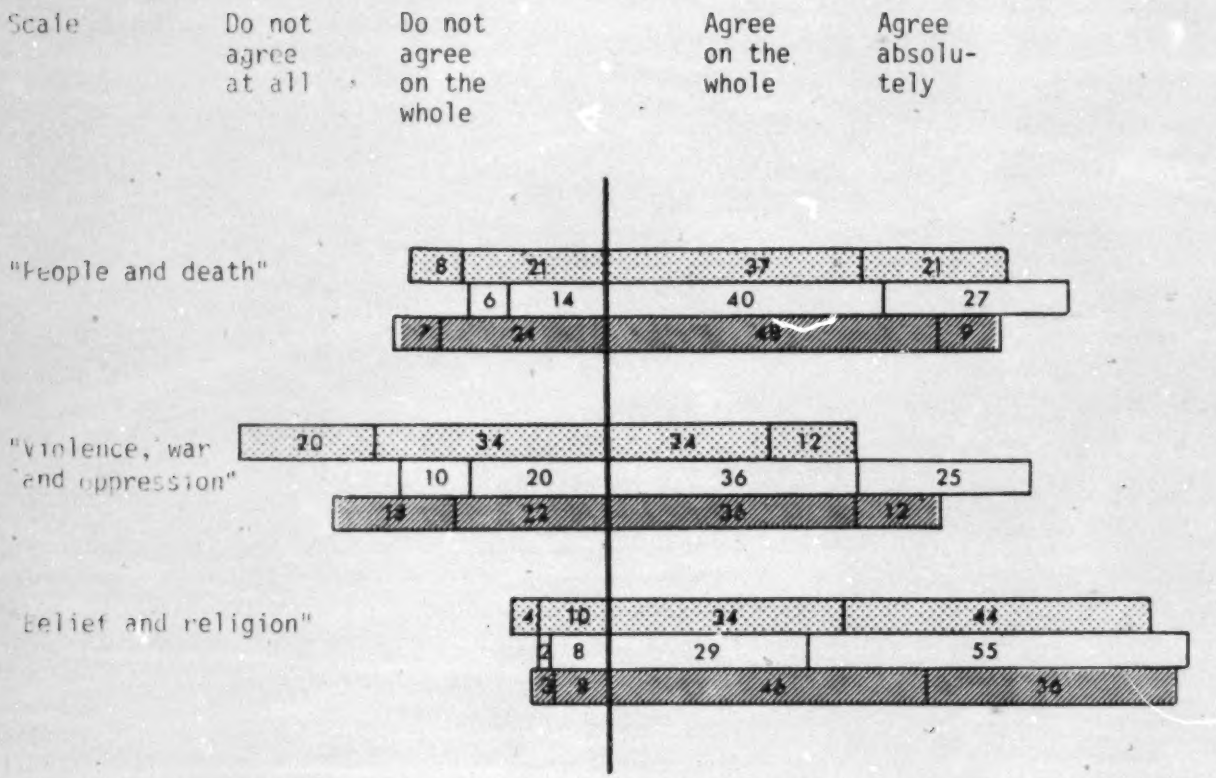


Fig. 3. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to give suitable concrete examples in discussing a question like this".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

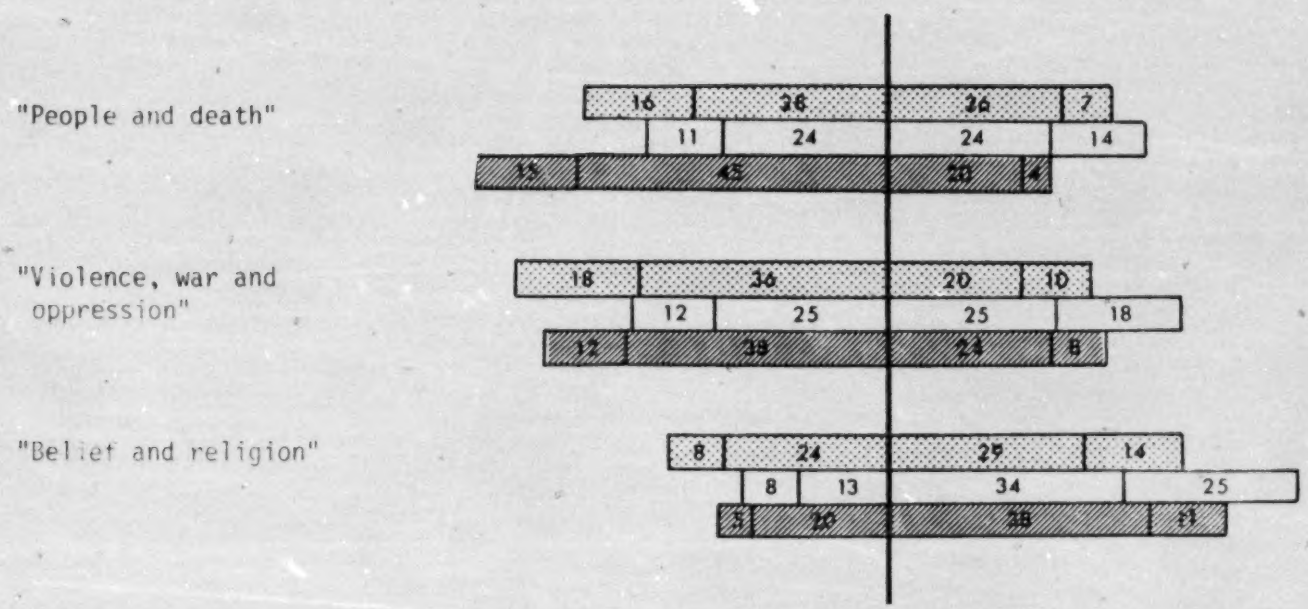


Fig. 9. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "The children have difficulty in understanding when one discusses this question".

The percentage distributin of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

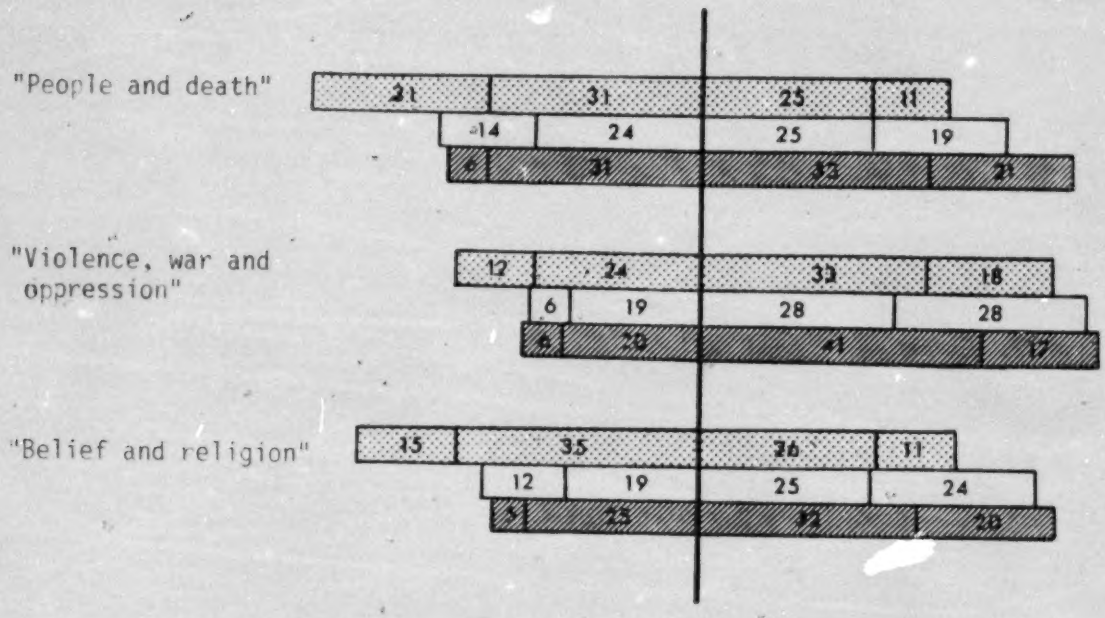


Fig. 10. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to get the children to understand that different people may have different views on a question". The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

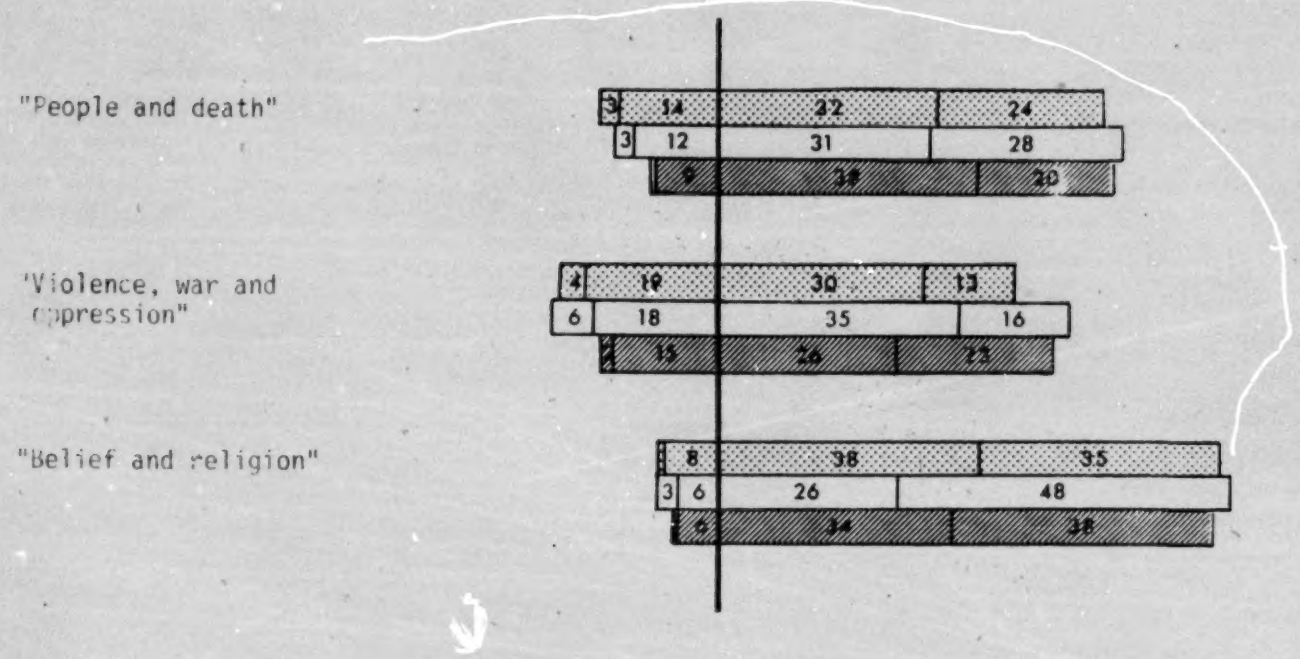


Fig. 11 The teachers attitudes to the statement "The children easily get into a conflict between their parents' views on this question and other views".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

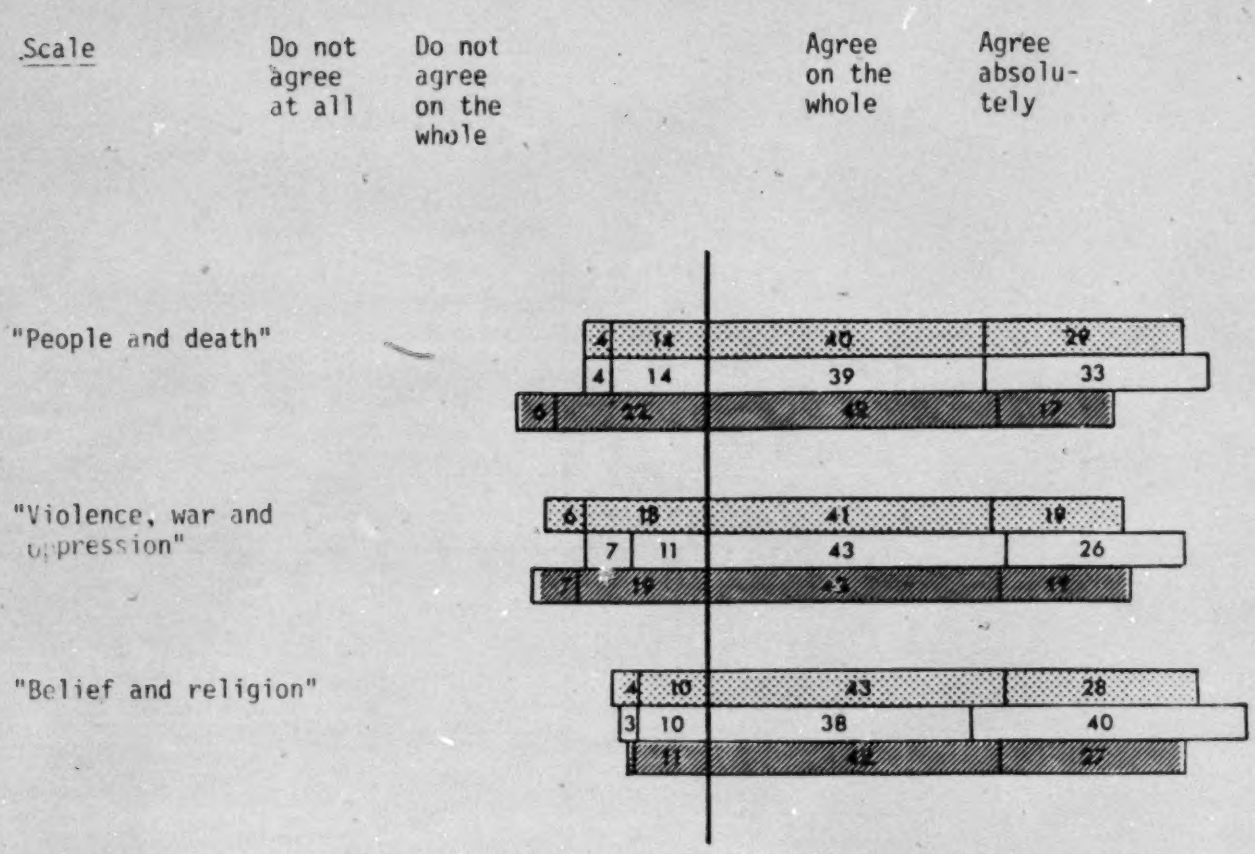


Fig. 12. The teachers attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to adapt the discussion of a question like this to the individual capabilities of different children".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

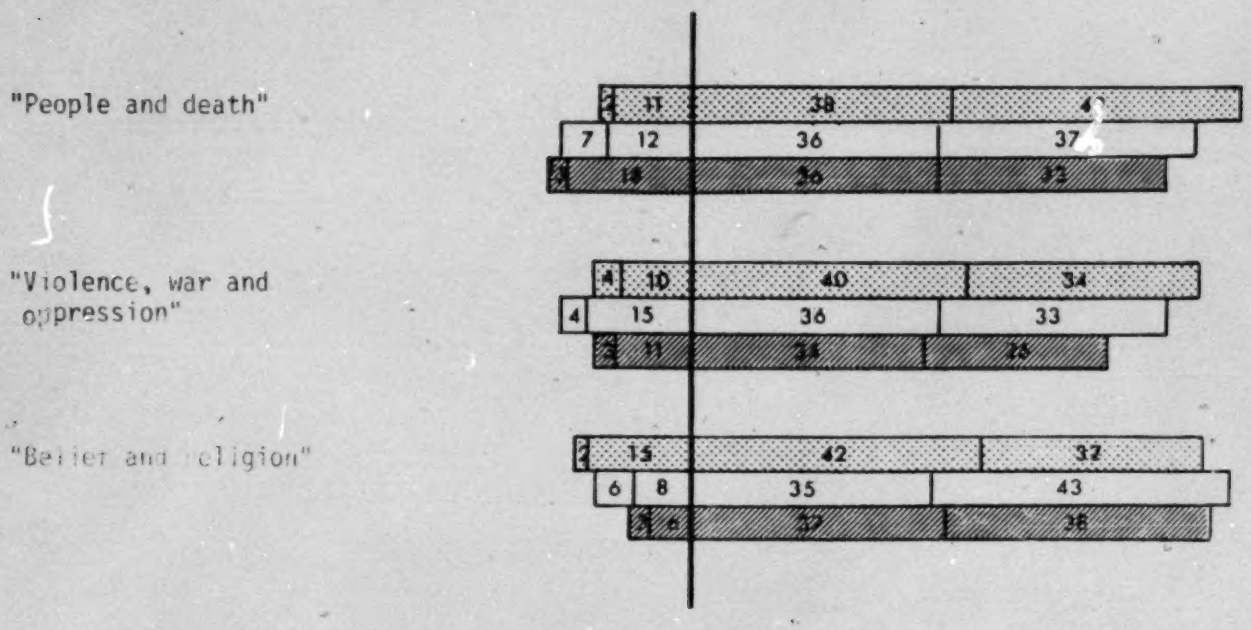


Fig. 13. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to get an idea of what the parents think, as regards the discussion of a question like this".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

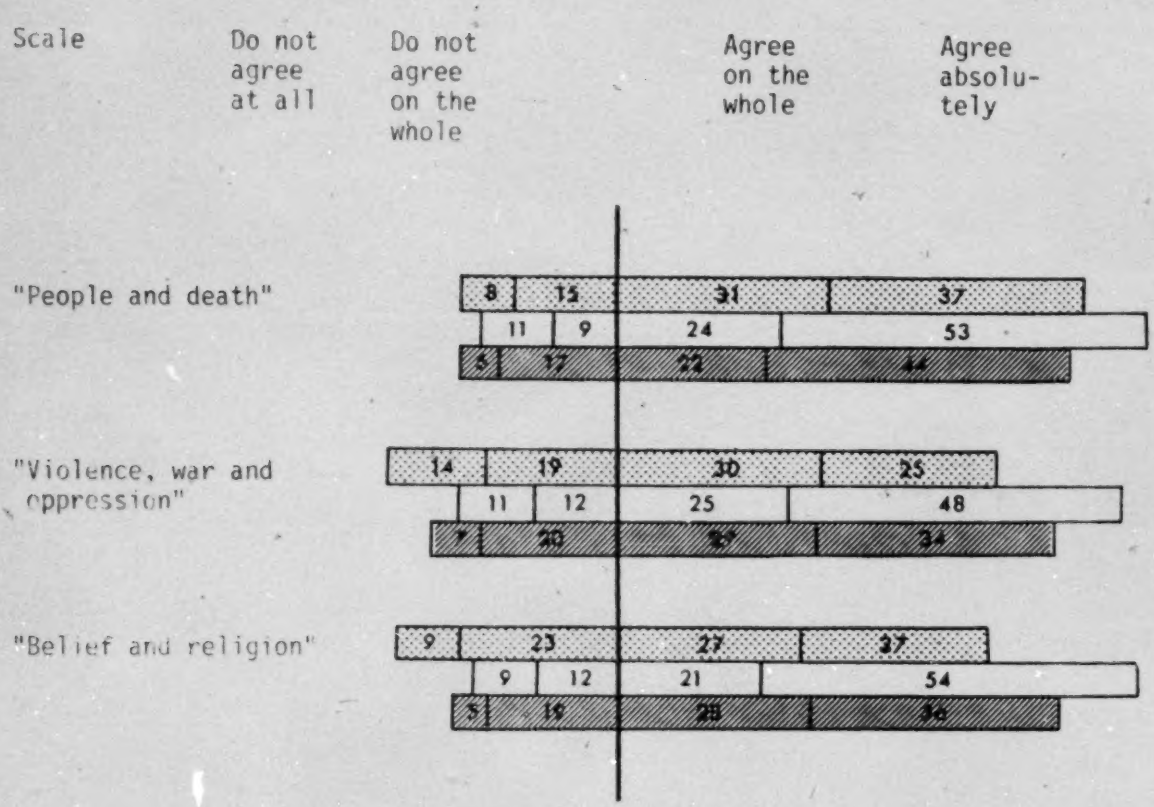


Fig.14. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "One reason why it is difficult to discuss a question like this with the children is that one is compelled to work with groups that are too large".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

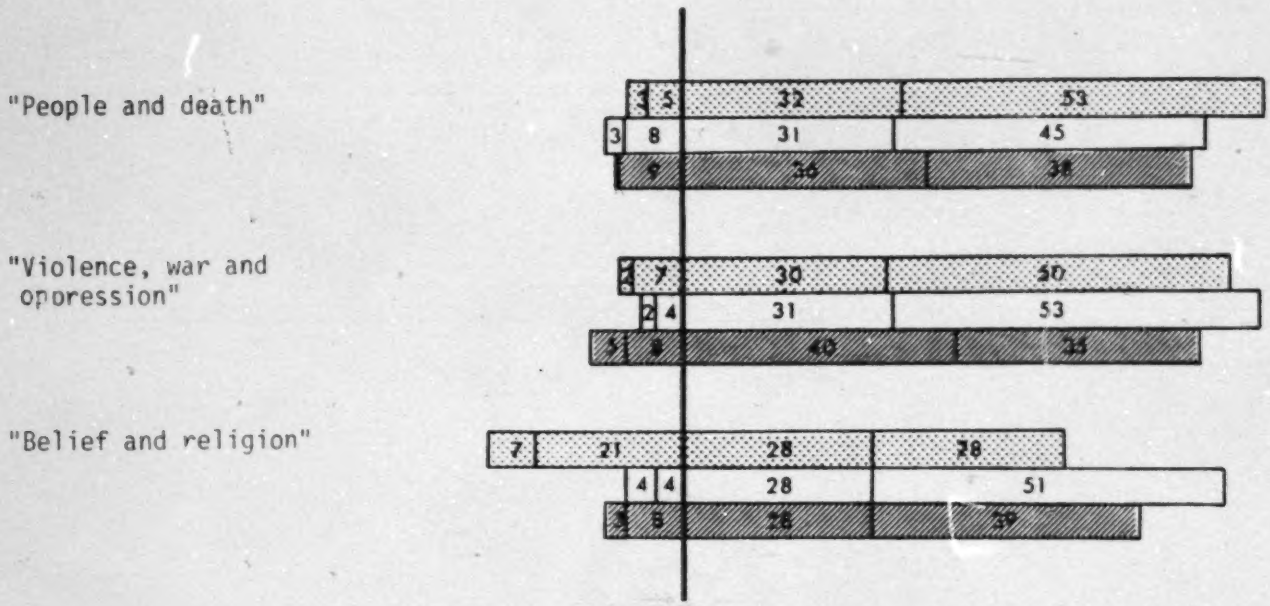


Fig. 15. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "There is a shortage of suitable teaching aids dealing with questions of this kind".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

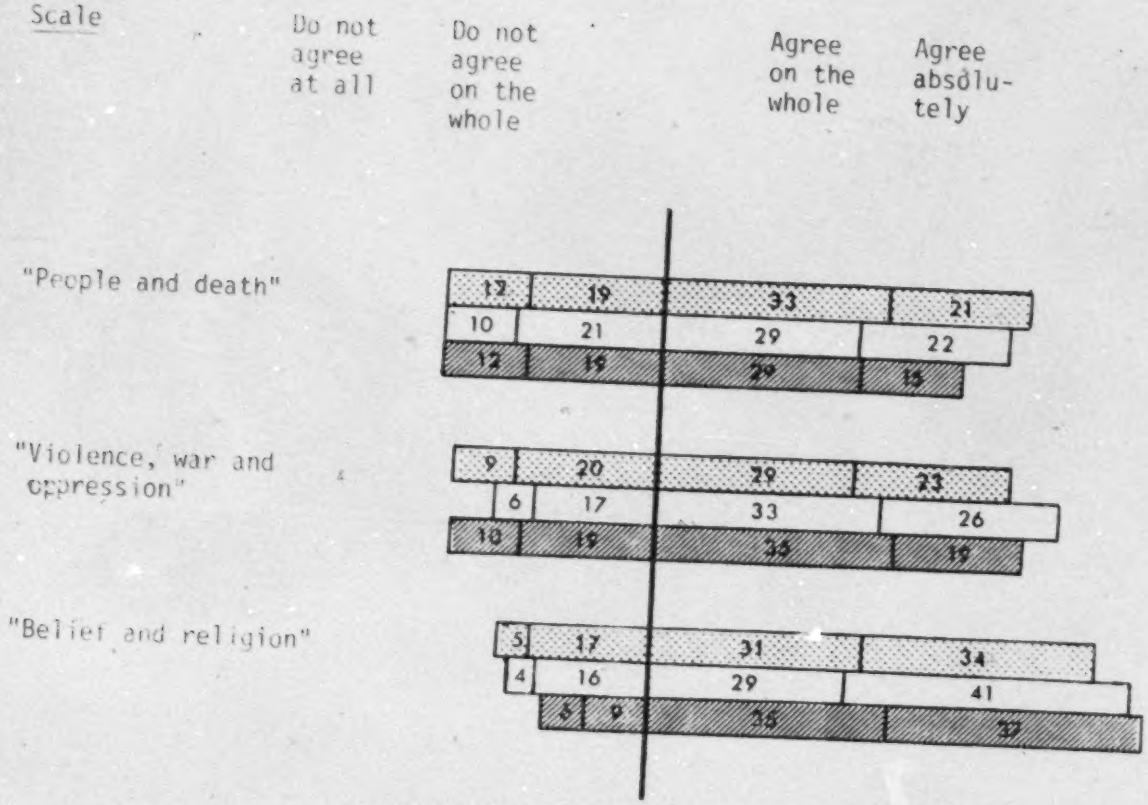


Fig. 16. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to be objectiv as regards the treatment of this problem complex".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

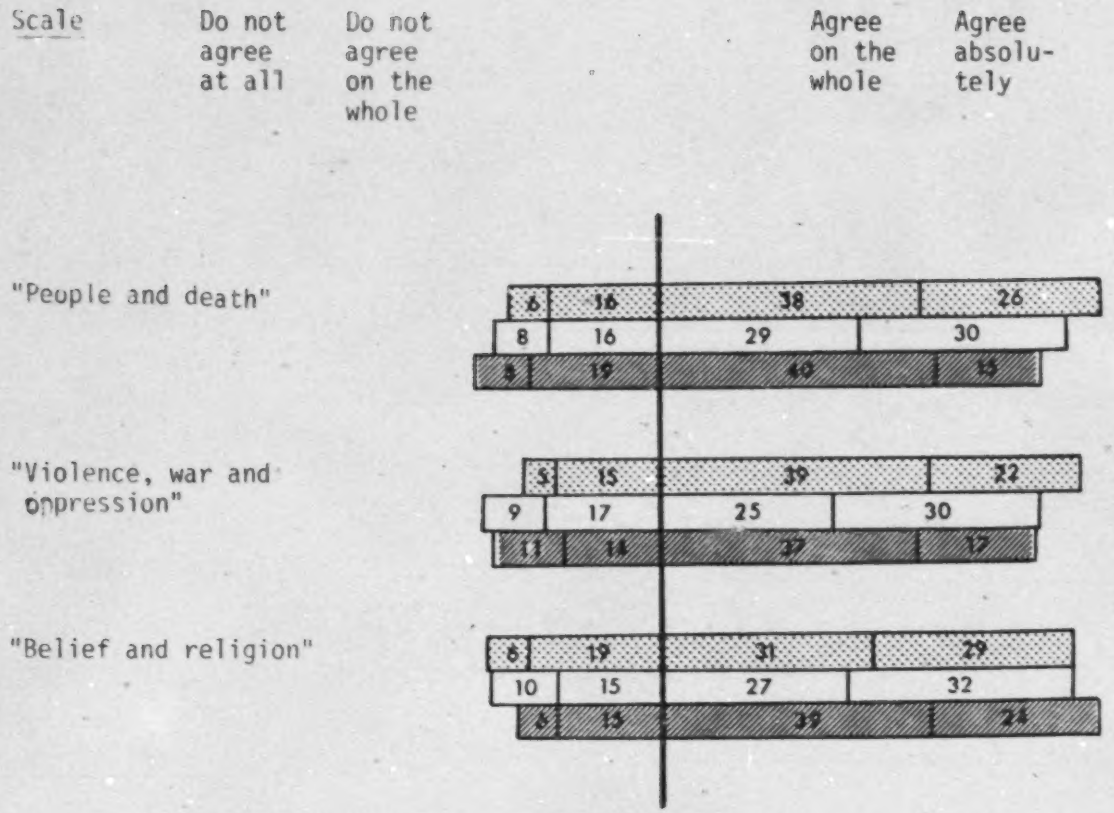


Fig. 17. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "It is difficult to strike a balance between saying candidly what one thinks oneself and avoiding influencing the children in a one-sided manner".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

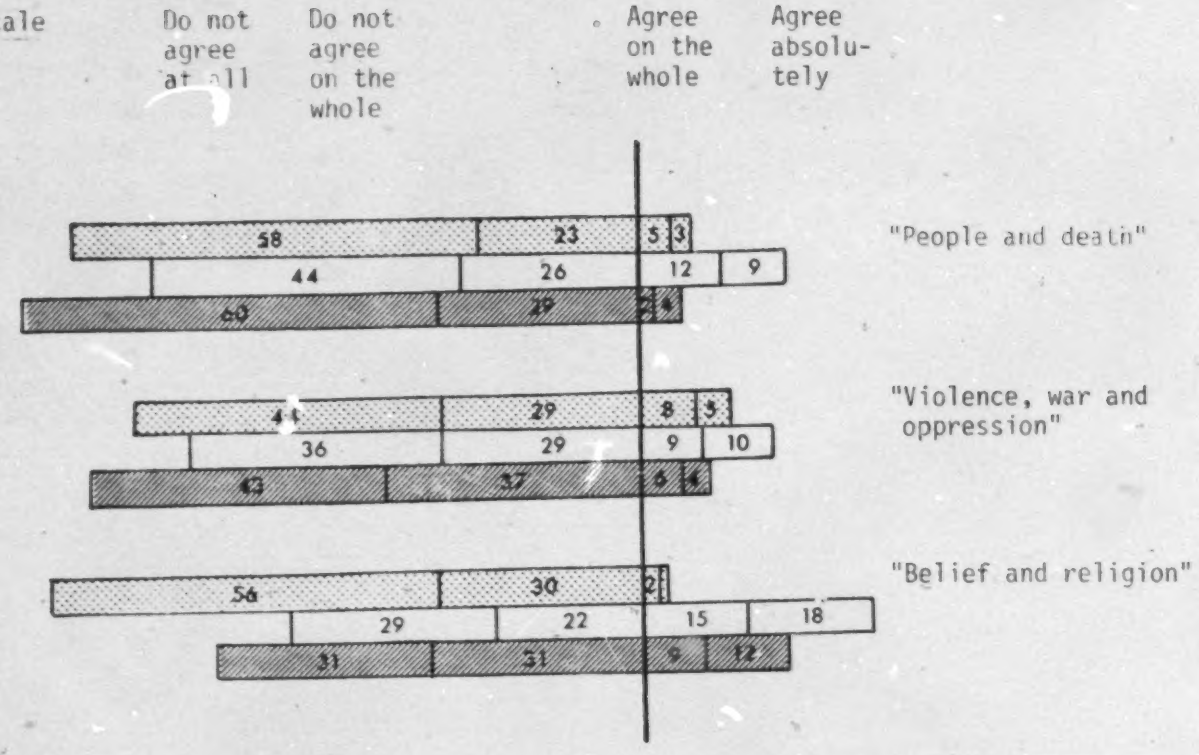


Fig. 18. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "I myself am doubtful whether questions of this kind should be discussed at all in groups of children".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

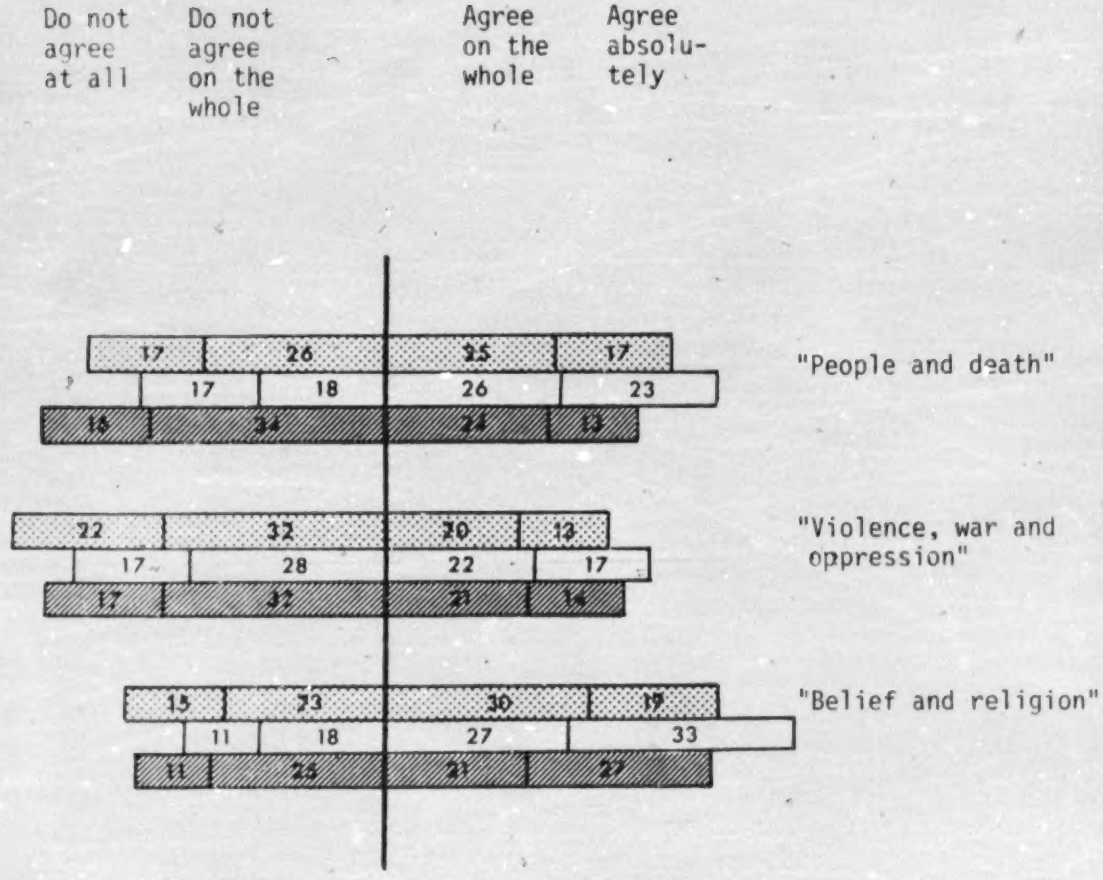


Fig. 19. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "One reason why it may be difficult to co-operate with one's colleagues in this kind of connection is that we often have different views on precisely these questions".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

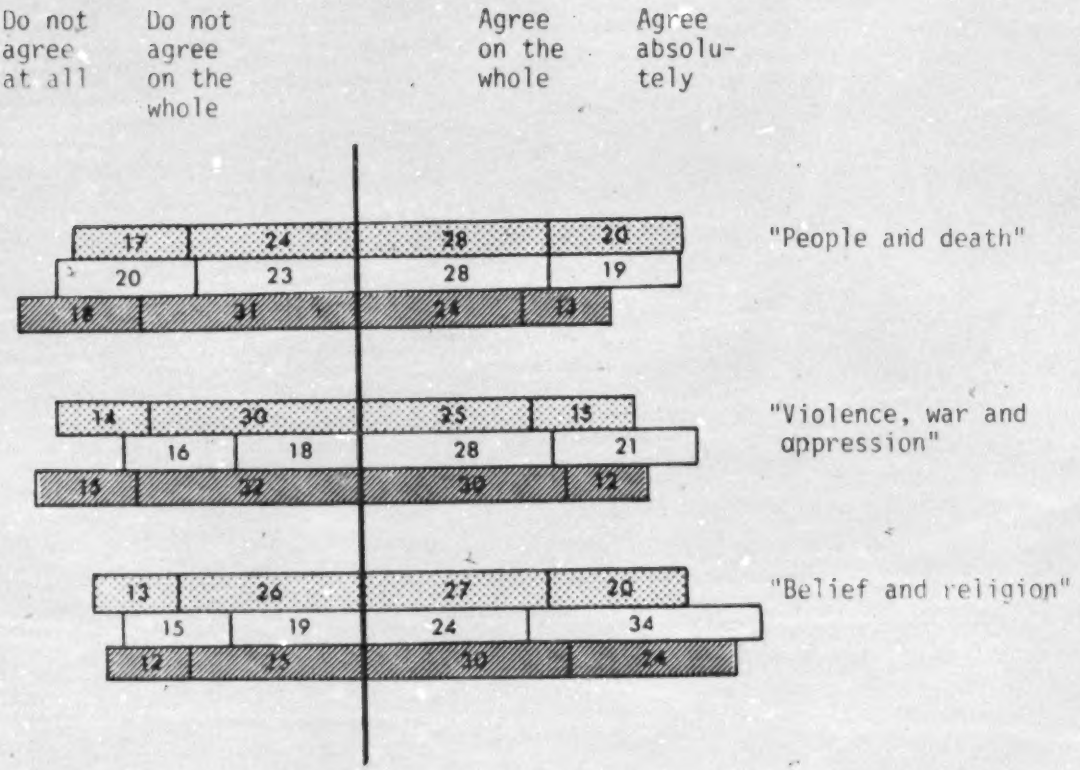


Fig. 20. The teachers' attitudes to the statement "I myself feel uncertain about questions of this kind".

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connexion with three ideological subjects.

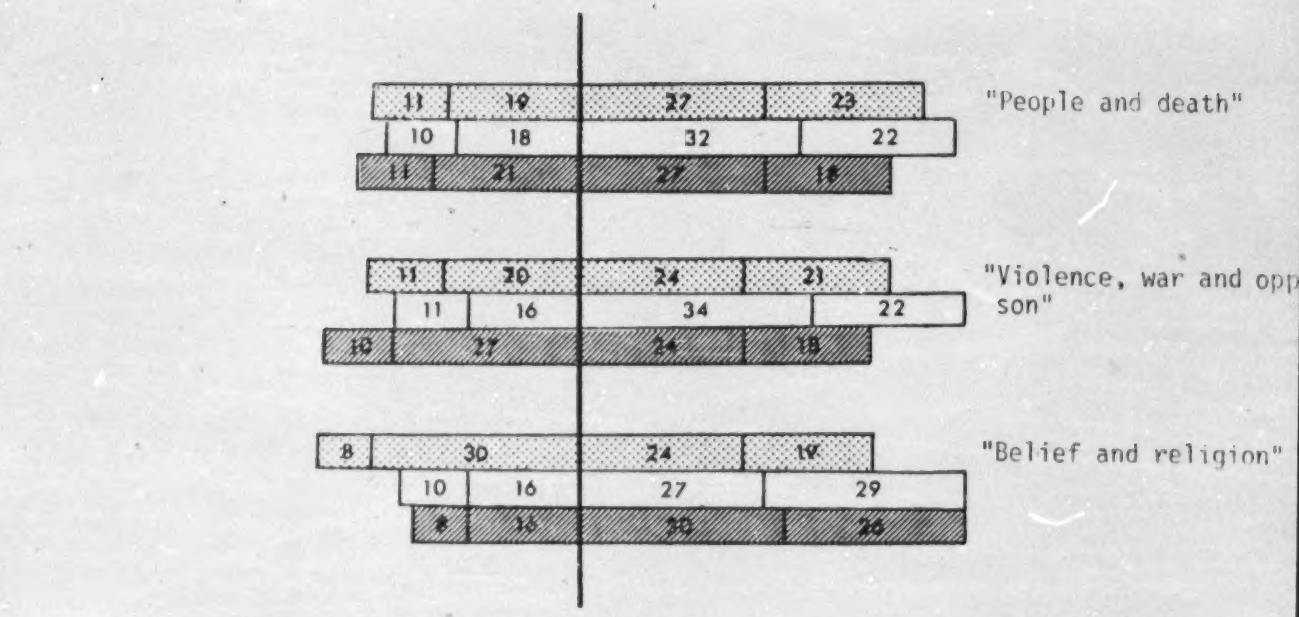


Fig. 21. The teachers' attitudes to the statement, "My training is inadequate. I know too little about this problem complex."

The percentage distribution of the teachers' answers in connection with three ideological subjects.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of the "Children and Ideology" (BaLi) research project is to investigate what capabilities children have of coping with and working on what are called "ideological questions". The project is also intended to shed light on problems which may be associated with the treatment of ideological questions in different teaching contexts.

By means of this questionnaire, the project group wishes to try and get to know the experiences, difficulties and desires of the different categories of teachers in connection with the "Children and Ideology" problem complex.

Instructions:

1 The questions are to be answered by the person to whom this letter is addressed.

2 Please answer the questions by placing a cross in the appropriate square, by ringing the appropriate sign or by writing on the lines provided for this purpose.

3 When you have finished, please check that you have answered all the questions.

4 Please return the questionnaire within 7 days in the enclosed, replypaid envelope.

The questions in this questionnaire are addressed to pre-school teachers, junior-school teachers and recreation leaders who are or have been working in their profession at least for some time during the last 3 years and have been in direct contact with children aged 4-9 years.

Are these conditions fulfilled in your case?

Place a cross in the appropriate square!

YES ☐ Please carry on and answer the other questions in the questionnaire.

NO ☐ Thank you for your assistance. Please send in the questionnaire in the enclosed reply-paid envelope. In spite of the fact that you are not going to fill in the answers to the other questions, it is very important that you should return the questionnaire, as otherwise we shall not know whether or not you belong to the group which we are to investigate.

First, we should like you to tell us a little about your training and your work. We are putting these questions in order to get an idea of the general background of the answers which you give to the other questions in the questionnaire.

1 In what year were you born? 19☐☐

2 In what year did you complete the training which led to your present employment?

19☐☐

3 How long have you been engaged altogether in your present profession?

Number of whole years ☐☐

4 What type of work are you doing at present? Place a cross against the alternative that best describes your work.

I am working as

01 ☐ a pre-school teacher at a nursery school

02 ☐ a pre-school teacher at a day nersery

03 ☐ a pre-school teacher at a day nursery where children at different ages are in the same group

04 ☐ a pre-school teacher with other duties, namely .....
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05 ☐ a junior-school teacher in an ordinary class

06 ☐ a junior-school teacher in a special class or clinic

07 ☐ a junior-school teacher with other duties, namely .....
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08 ☐ a recreation leader at a leisure centre

09 ☐ a recreation leader with other duties, namely .....
.....

10 ☐ I am doing another type of work at present/I am not working

5 In what type of place has your work been mainly located in the last 3 years?

1 ☐ The central parts of Stockholm, Göteborg or Malmö

2 ☐ The suburbs of Stockholm, Göteborg or Malmö

3 ☐ A medium-sized town (more than 10.000 inhabitants)

4 ☐ A small town (a maximum of 10.000 inhabitants)

5 ☐ A village (at least 500 inhabitants)

6 ☐ A country district

6 This question concerns only pre-school teachers and recreation leaders. If you are a junior-school teacher, please place a cross in the last square.

How often do you have at your workplace a "meeting" with the children on some subject?

1 ☐ Practically every day

2 ☐ Once or twice a week

3 ☐ Once or twice a month

4 ☐ Almost never

5 ☐ Never

6 ☐ I am not to answer the question (junior-school teacher)

The following section includes questions about your experience and opinions with reference to the problem of how ideological questions are to be dealt with in the pre-school and in the junior school.

"Ideological questions" means questions concerning, for example, the meaning and fundamental conditions of life and people's relations to each other. They are accordingly questions which often crop up in ideological, religious or political opinions.

If you look through the following questions, you will find three examples of situations which we think may lead to a problem complex coming to the fore. Many of the following questions are directly linked with these examples.

In asking about children and ideological questions, we naturally presuppose that questions of this kind may come to the fore in many different ways. They may do so through direct questions or statements expressing the children's thoughts, and also through drawing, acting, play or other activity.

PETER'S MATERNAL GRANDFATHER HAS DIED. PETER IS NOW WONDERING WHERE HIS GRANDFATHER IS AND WHAT BEING DEAD REALLY MEANS.

7 Imagine that you are to deal with this ideological questions in some way. It is possible that, as a teacher, you would then run into certain difficulties. - What would these difficulties be due to, in that case?

In the column below, there are a number of statements which give some conceivable reasons why problems might arise. Please mark the extent to which you agree with each statement by ringing the appropriate sign.

If you are unable to make up your mind about any statement, please indicate this by placing a cross in the "Cannot answer" column.

		Do not agree at all	Do not agree on the whole	Doubtful	Agree on the whole	Agree absolutely	Cannot answer
		1	2	3	4	5	6
A	It is difficult to capture the children's attention and get them interested in the discussion when one raises a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
B	It is difficult to give suitable concrete examples in discussing a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
C	It is difficult to adapt the discussion of a question like this to the individual capabilities of different children	--	-	0	+	++	—
D	The children have difficulty in understanding when one talks about this question	—	–	0	+	++	—
E	It is difficult to be objective as regards the treatment of this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
F	My training is inadequate . I know too little about this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
G	I myself feel uncertain about questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
H	There is a shortage of suitable teaching aids dealing with questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
I	The children easily get into a conflict between their parent's views on this question and other views	—	–	0	+	++	—

K	It is difficult to get an idea of what the parents think, as regards the discussion of a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
L	I myself am doubtful whether questions of this kind should be discussed at all in groups of children	—	–	0	+	++	—
M	One reason why it may be difficult to co-operate with one colleagues in this kind of connection is that we often have different views on precisely these questions	—	–	0	+	++	—
N	One reason why it is difficult to talk about a question like this with the children is that one is compelled to work with groups that are too large	—	–	0	+	++	—
O	It is difficult to get the children to understand that different people may have different views on a question of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
P	It is difficult to strike a balance between saying candidly what one thinks oneself and avoiding influencing the children in a one-sided manner	—	–	0	+	++	—
		1	2	3	4	5	6

8 If you wisch to comment on the answers you gave on the preceding page, you may do so here:

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The ideological question raised by the example on page 4 could be inserted, together with a number of other similar questions, under the heading of

MAN AND DEATH

9 Have you had any particularly favourable experiences in your work in connection with the discussion of questions about death?
Please give an account of any situation which went off particularly well.

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10 Have you had any unfavourable experiences in your work, as regards this problem complex? Have you been involved in any situation which you think was particularly unsatisfactory or which went off badly? If so, please give a short account of it.

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GUNILLA HAS SEEN ON TELEVISION SOME INCIDENTS IN THE WAR IN VIETNAM. SHE HAS SEEN THE BOMBERS AND WEEPING CHILDREN WHO HAVE NO FOOD OR CLOTHS. SHE WONDERS WHY THERE IS A WAR ON AND WHY THEY CAN'T STOP IT.

11 If you were to discuss a question of this type in some way, what difficulties do you think you would meet with?

In the column below, the same statement as before are reproduced. Please go through them and mark with one circle for each statement the extent to which you think you can agree.

If you are unable to make up your mind about any statement, please indicate this by placing a cross in the "Cannot answer" column.

	Do not agree at all 1	Do not agree on the whole 2	Doubtful 3	Agree on the whole 4	Agree absolutely 5	Cannot answer 6
A. It is difficult to capture the children's attention and get them interested in the discussion when one raises a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
B It is difficult to give suitable concrete examples in discussing a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
C It is difficult to adapt the discussion of a question like this to the individual capabilities of different children	--	-	0	+	++	—
D The children have difficulty in understanding when one talks about this question	—	–	0	+	++	—
E It is difficult to be objective as regards the treatment of this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
F My training is inadequate . I know too little about this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
G I myself feel uncertain about questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
H There is a shortage of suitable teaching aids dealing with questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
I The children easily get into a conflict between their parent's views on this question and other views	—	–	0	+	++	—

K	It is difficult to get an idea of what the parents think, as regards the discussion of a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	=
L	I myself am doubtful whether questions of this kind should be discussed at all in groups of children	—	–	0	+	++	=
M	One reason why it may be difficult to co-operate with one colleagues in this kind of connection is that we often have different views on precisely these questions	—	–	0	+	++	=
N	One reason why it is difficult to talk about a question like this with the children is that one is compelled to work with groups that are too large	—	–	0	+	++	=
O	It is difficult to get the children to understand that different people may have different views on a question of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	=
P	It is difficult to strike a balance between saying candidly what one thinks oneself and avoiding influencing the children in a one-sided manner	—	–	0	+	++	=
		1	2	3	4	5	6

12 If you wish to comment on the answers you gave on the preceding page, you may do so here.

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The ideological question raised by the example on page 6 could be inserted, together with a number of other similar questions, under the heading of

VIOLENCE, WAR AND OPPRESSION

13 Have you had any particularly favourable experiences in your work in connection with the discussion of questions about violence, war and oppression?
Please give an account of any situation which went off particularly well.

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14 Have you had any unfavourable experiences in your work, as regards this problem complex? Have you been involved in any situation which you think was particularly unsatisfactory or which went off badly? If so, please give a short account of it.

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SVEN HAS HEARD FROM A PLAYMATE WHO GOES TO SUNDAY SCHOOL THAT THERE IS A GOD, WHO HAS MADE EVERYTHING AND WHO LISTENS TO YOU IF YOU PRAY TO HIM. THIS HAS MADE SVEN CURIOUS, BECAUSE HE HAS NOT HEARD MUCH OF IT BEFORE. NOW HE IS WONDERING WHAT THE REAL TRUTH IS ABOUT THAT.

15 In dealing with a religious question like this, what difficulties might arise for the teacher?

Please go through the statements in the same way as before and indicate what you think by your markings.

If you are unable to make up your mind about any statement, please indicate this by placing a cross in the "Cannot answer" column.

		Do not agree at all	Do not agree on the whole	Doubtful	Agree on the whole	Agree absolutely	Cannot answer
		1	2	3	4	5	6
A	It is difficult to capture the children's attention and get them interested in the discussion when one raises a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
B	It is difficult to give suitable concrete examples in discussing a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	—
C	It is difficult to adapt the discussion of a question like this to the individual capabilities of different children	--	-	0	+	++	—
D	The children have difficulty in understanding when one talks about this question	—	–	0	+	++	—
E	It is difficult to be objective as regards the treatment of this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
F	My training is inadequate . I know too little about this problem complex	—	–	0	+	++	—
G	I myself feel uncertain about questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
H	There is a shortage of suitable teaching aids dealing with questions of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	—
I	The children easily get into a conflict between their parent's views on this question and other views	—	–	0	+	++	—

K	It is difficult to get an idea of what the parents think, as regards the discussion of a question like this	—	–	0	+	++	— —
L	I myself am doubtful whether questions of this kind should be discussed at all in groups of children	—	–	0	+	++	— —
M	One reason why it may be difficult to co-operate with one colleagues in this kind of connection is that we often have different views on precisely those questions	—	–	0	+	++	— —
N	One reason why it is difficult to talk about a question like this with the children is that one is compelled to work with groups that are too large	—	–	0	+	++	— —
O	It is difficult to get the children to understand that different people may have different views on a question of this kind	—	–	0	+	++	— —
P	It is difficult to strike a balance between saying candidly what one thinks oneself and avoiding influencing the children in a one-sided manner	—	–	0	+	++	— —
		1	2	3	4	5	6

16 If you wish to comment on the answers you gave on the preceding page, you may do so here.

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The ideological question raised by the example on page 8 could be inserted, together with a number of other similar questions, under the heading of

BELIEF AND RELIGION

17 Have you had any particularly favourable experiences in your work in connection with the discussion of questions about belief and religion? Please give an account of any situation which sent off particularly well.

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18 Have you had any unfavourable experiences in your work, as regards this problem complex? Have you been involved in any situation which you think was particularly unsatisfactory or which went off badly? If so, please give a short account of it.

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19 Some problem complexes are given below, each of which separately comprises a number of different ideological questions. You have encountered three of these complexes previously in the inquiry. How often have you noticed in your work that ideas and speculations on these different problem complexes are of current interest to the children? As we have previously pointed out, we naturally expect that the children can bring up topics in many different ways, not only by putting direct questions but also by means of drawings, play or other activity. Please go through the 15 problem complexes and mark with one cross for each of them how often you encounter situations in which questions of this kind are of current interest to the children.

Problem complex	Almost never	Once or twice a term	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Practically every day
How everything began	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How life is carried on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Growing old	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People and death	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family relations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Owning and sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Showing consideration and tolerance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Questions concerning responsibility and conscience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling lonely and forlorn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Differences between people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with one's feeling: anger, fear, joy, sorrow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Violence, war and oppression	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sickness or accidents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Belief and religion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Society and politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	1	2	3	4	5

Any comments on question 19 .....

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20 How important and urgent do you consider that the speculations on these problem complexes are to the children themselves? Put one cross for each problem complex.

Problem complex	Not urgent at all	Not particularly urgent	Fairly Urgent	Very urgent
	1	2	3	4
How everything began	☐	☐	☐	☐
How life is carried on	☐	☐	☐	☐
Growing old	☐	☐	☐	☐
People and death	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family relations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Owning and sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Showing consideration and tolerans	☐	☐	☐	☐
Questions concerning responsibility and conscience	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling lonely and forlorn	☐	☐	☐	☐
Differences between people	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with one's feelings: anger, fear, joy, sorrow	☐	☐	☐	☐
Violence, war and oppression	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sickness or accidents	☐	☐	☐	☐
Belief and religion	☐	☐	☐	☐
Society and politics	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any comments on question 20 .....

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21 How difficult or how easy do you think it is to discuss with the children the questions and subjects included in the following problem complexes? Indicate this by putting one cross for each problem complex.

Problem complex	Very difficult	Fairly difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Fairly easy	Very easy
How everything began	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How life is carried on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Growing old	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People and death	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family relations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Owning and sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Showing consideration and tolerance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Questions concerning responsibility and conscience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling lonely and forlorn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Differences between people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with one's feelings: anger, fear, joy, sorrow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Violence, war and oppression	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sickness or accidents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Belief and religion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Society and politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	1	2	3	4	5

Any comments on question 21 .....

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22 Have you had any particularly favourable experiences in connection with the discussion of ideological questions in other respects which you have not included previously? If so, you may describe them here.

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23 Here you may include all difficulties and unfavourable experiences in connection with the discussion of ideological questions which you have not described previously.

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This questionnaire concludes with some questions about your own involvement with ideological questions. These questions have been included in order to enable us to judge whether the educational problems connected with ideological questions in the (pre) -school are experienced in different ways by teachers with different approaches to these questions. We have tried to formulate these questions in as general a way as possible, in order that they may not be felt to be too great an encroachment on personal integrety. But there is perhaps reason, all the same, to point out once more that the answers you give will be dealt with in strict confidence and that they will be used only in a way that will make it impossible to identify individual answers. If you still think that the questions are too intrusive, there are special alternative answers in which you can state that you do not wish to reply.

24 Indicate with a cross how interested you are in questions in the following six fields:

		Not interested	Fairly interested	Very interested	I refrain from replaying
A	Questions concerning art, music or literature	☐	☐	☐	☐
B	Questions concerning religion or similar outlooks on life	☐	☐	☐	☐
C	Questions concerning views of mankind and personality development	☐	☐	☐	☐
D	Questions concerning politics and related fields	☐	☐	☐	☐
E	Questions concerning the preservation of the environment and natural amenities	☐	☐	☐	☐
F	Questions concerning the individual and society (social questions)	☐	☐	☐	☐
		1	2	3	4

25 How often do you usually take part in association work or other activities arranged by an organization with a political orientation?

1 ☐ Practically never

2 ☐ Once a year or so

3 ☐ At least once a month

4 ☐ At least once a week

5 ☐ I refrain from replying

26 How often do you usually take part in church services or in other activities with a religious orientation?

1 ☐ Practically never

2 ☐ Once a year or so

3 ☐ At least once a month

4 ☐ At least once a week

5 ☐ I refrain from replying

27 How often do you usually take part in association work or other activities arranged by an organization with some other orientation (not religious or political)?

1 ☐ Practically never

2 ☐ Once a year or so

3 ☐ At least once a month

4 ☐ At least once a week

5 ☐ I refrain from replying